

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

I seek the assistance of Allâh the Beneficent Creator the Merciful bounty giver.

CHAPTER 3

Âl ‘Imrân: The Family of ‘Imrân

(REVEALED AT MADÍNAH: 20 sections; 200 verses) (78)

The name of this chapter is taken from the mention of *‘Imrân* in verse 33. *‘Imrân* is the father of Mûsâ and Hârûn. It is an appropriate title as the chapter deals with the departure of prophethood from the Mûsâic dispensation. The chapter opens with a statement relating to the Divine origin of the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân as well as the *Taurât*¹ and the *Injîl*². It then gives a rule of interpretation, neglect of which has led to numerous errors in understanding of the Divine guidance. This rule of interpretation, which must be borne in mind in interpreting the Divine Book, is that every allegorical statement must be interpreted in such a manner that it may not contradict any of the clear principles as laid down by Divine revelation. As the reconstructed Christian “religion”³ is based really on the wrong interpretation of certain allegorical statements, the rule is appropriately laid down as a preliminary to a discussion of the Christian “religion”.

The preliminary remarks of the first section are followed in the second by an assertion of the Unity of Allâh, which is laid down as the clear basis of all the Divine Guidance that came to human beings, and its ultimate triumph is predicted. The third section refers to the departure from the house of Isrâ’îl of the devotional kingdom which was now being granted to another people; and the last chosen members of the Isrâ’îlite race are mentioned in the fourth. Among these is ‘Îsâ, various misconceptions regarding him necessitates rather a lengthy discussion in the two sections that follow. The seventh section continues the controversy with the Jews and the Christians, while the eighth deals with their machinations to discredit Islâm. The ninth speaks of the testimony of previous

1 : The name of the Book of nabî Mûsâ was *AT-Taurât* or simply the *Taurât*. This Book is lost or was destroyed.

2 : The name of the Book of nabî ‘Îsâ was *Al-Injîl* or simply the *Injîl*. This book is lost or was destroyed.

3 : The term “religion” is not a Divine term; it refers to a man-made way of life which originated from the pagans.

Books and prophets to the truth of Islâm, while the tenth mentions the overwhelming testimony afforded by the Ka‘bah, the new devotional centre of the world. This is followed by an exhortation in the following section to the Muslims to remain united if they would achieve triumph, and in view of the coming conflicts they are told in the next to have guarded relations with the Jews, who, while outwardly friendly, were inwardly hostile to the Muslims. The incidents of the battle of Uḥud, the causes of the misfortune experienced in it, and how triumph can be obtained are the points discussed from section thirteen to the eighteenth. The nineteenth speaks of the carping of the People of the Book, while the twentieth deals with the ultimate triumph of the faithful.

The importance of the connection of this with the preceding chapter may be judged from the fact that, taken together, they are termed *zahrâwân* (meaning *the two bright and shining ones*). The two, in fact, may be treated as a single chapter, as each supplement and explains the other. The 2nd chapter opens with a controversy with the Jews, and deals at length with their contentions, referring only briefly to the Christians. The 3rd chapter opens with a controversy with the Christians, and deals at length with their contentions, referring only briefly to the Jews. Again, the second chapter deals particularly with the necessity of fighting against an enemy who was bent upon the extirpation of Islâm, while the third deals with the events of one of the battles which the enemy waged with a view to wipe out Islâm by destroying its stronghold in Madînah.

The whole of this chapter was revealed at Madînah and it is generally supposed to be the second or the third in order in the Madînah revelation (*Itqân fî ‘Ulûm al-Qur’ân* (Commentary), by Imâm Jalâl al-Dîn ‘Abd al-Rahmân ibn Abî Bakr al-Suyûtî). The latter portion, from section 13 almost to the end, distinctly relates the incidents of the battle of Uḥud, and therefore the third year of the Hijrah may be fixed as the date of its revelation. The first portion, especially that dealing with the birth and ministry of ‘Îsâ is said by some to have been revealed on the occasion of the visit of a deputation of the Najrân Christians which took place in the tenth year of the Hijrah, but there is no evidence for it. The whole chapter belongs to the third year of the Hijrah, with the possible exception of verse 61 which speaks of *Mubâhalah*, and may have been revealed on the occasion of the visit of the Najrân deputation.

SECTION 1: Rule of Interpretation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

I seek the assistance of Allâh the Beneficent Creator the Merciful bounty giver.

1 *Alif lâm mîm* ^a

2 Allâh, (there is) no deity but He, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting, by Whom all subsist.^a

3 He has revealed to you the Book with truth,^a verifying that which is before it, and He revealed the *Taurât* and the *Injîl* ^b

1a. These letters sets the tune in which the verses must be recited.

2a. In consonance with its character as controverting Christian doctrines, this controversy being carried on to the 84th verse, the chapter fitly opens with two attributes of the Divine Being, the Ever-living and the Self-subsisting, which deal a death-blow to the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus Christ.⁴ The statement that there is *no deity but He* contains an ideal expression of the devotion of Islâm in four words.

3a. For the sake of simplicity I render *haqq* as meaning *truth*, but *haqq* primarily signifies *suitableness to the requirements of wisdom, justice, right, truth, or fact; or to the exigencies of the case* (*Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). Hence the true sense of the phrase is that the Qur'ân was revealed suitably to the requirements of wisdom and justice, and to the exigencies of the case; in other words, it was revealed at a time when revelation was sorely needed by humanity. This argument of its truth is one which even the most hostile critic is unable to refute. To say nothing of earlier “religions”, Christianity, which was then the latest phase of monotheism was corrupt to the core. “The Christianity of the seventh century,” says Muir “was itself decrepit and corrupt. It was disabled by contending schisms, and had substituted the puerilities of superstition for the pure expansive faith of early ages” (“Life of Mohamet,” intr., p. lxxxiii).

4 : Please note that whenever we refer to the Jewish or Christian Scriptures first refer to the Introduction of Chapter One which is Sûrah *Al-Fâtihah*. Its footnotes are very important in order to understand clearly what conditions are applied.

The commentators explain *bi-l-ḥaqq* as signifying the *pointing out of the right way in the differences which existed before it*, or as *giving a correct account of the past histories of the prophets*, or as *being true with respect to the promises and threats relating to the future, and thus making believers stick to the right path* (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). Some commentators explain it as meaning *with arguments and proof* (*Bahr al-Muhîṭ* (Commentary), by Imâm Athîr al-Dîn Abû ‘Abd Allâh Abû Ḥayyân al-Undlusî).

3b. In the whole of the previous chapter the *Taurât* and the *Injîl* are not mentioned by name, though frequently referred to, specially the former, as *that which is with you*. *Taurât* is the name given to the books of Mûsâ. The Pentateuch is one of the names given by the Jews, and hence according to the Jews it is also called by the Hebrew word *Torah*. The *Taurât* does not signify the Old Testament, because the latter is the name of the whole collection of the books of the Isrâ’îlite prophets. *Torah* in Hebrew literature signifies *the revealed will of God*. The word *Kitâb*, Book, conveys, however, a wider significance and it cannot mean the Old Testament or the Bible.

The word *Injîl* does not signify, as supposed by Muir and others, the New Testament. According to the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân no prophet, to whom any book was revealed, appeared after ‘Îsâ, who, being the last of the Isrâ’îlite Prophets, was granted a revelation called the *Injîl*, which cannot stand for the Evangel or the Gospel, and may signifies literally *good tidings*. The reason why ‘Îsâ’s revelation was called *Injîl* or *good tidings* is that it gave the glad news of the advent of the Last of the Prophets, which is variously described in Jesus’ metaphorical language as the advent of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:15), the coming of the Lord (Matthew 21:40), the appearance of the Comforter (John 14:16), or the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17), etc. Not only are the Acts, the Epistles, and the Book of Revelation not recognized by the Qur’ân as parts of the *Injîl*, or the Gospel, but it does not even recognize the Gospels according to Matthew, etc., as the *Injîl* which was revealed to Jesus Christ, though the current Gospels might contain fragments of the original teaching. This view of the Gospel as taken by the Qur’ân is now admitted to be the correct one, as all criticism points to some original of the synoptics (i.e., the Gospels) which is now entirely lost. The Qur’ân nowhere suggests that the original *Injîl* of nabî ‘Îsâ, is the revelation given to Jesus Christ, nor did it existed at the time of the Holy Prophet.

4 Aforetime, a guidance for the people,^a and He sent the Discrimination.^b Those who disbelieve in the messages of Allâh — for them is a severe chastisement. And Allâh is Mighty, the Owner of retribution.^c

5 Surely nothing in the earth or in the *samâ'* is hidden from Allâh.

6 He it is Who shapes you in the wombs as He pleases. There is no deity but He, the Mighty, the Wise.

4a. The *Taurât* and the *Injîl* were undoubtedly a guidance before the Qur'ân; but as they now exist, they are not the reveal words of any of the prophets. The so-called numerous prophecies cannot be used as the fulfilled in the advent of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad.

4b. For an explanation of the word *Furqân*, see 2:53a. The Arabic Glorious Qur'ân is here mentioned by the name *Furqân*, or that which distinguishes between truth and falsehood, in reference to the fact that the Qur'ân was sent to separate the truth which was to be met with in previous revelation from the falsehood which had found its way into it. As the *Furqân* or the Discrimination in the case of the Holy Prophet was also afforded by the battle of Badr, this event is referred to in verse 13 as a prelude to the actual controversy.

4c. *Intiqâm* is derived from *niqmah*, which means *the retribution of one who is guilty* (*Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaiḥ Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Ḥusain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî and the *Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muḥibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faïd Murtaḍâ*). It conveys the idea of *avenging* but not of *revenge*; *intaqamtu minhu* signifies *I inflicted penal retribution on him for that which he had done*, or *I punished him* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). *Dhu-ntiqâm*, as an attribute of the Divine Being, means the *Inflictor of retribution* or the *Owner of retribution*.

7 He it is Who has revealed the Book to you, some of its verses are *Muḥkamât* (absolutely clear and lucid, decisive); they are *Ummul-Kitâb* (the core of the original foundation of all revelation; the Essence of Allâh's Will and Law. The basis of the Book and also its protector, hence the '*mother of the Book*'); and others are *Mutashâbihât* (allegorical).^a Then those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part of it, which is allegorical, seeking to mislead and seeking to give it (their own) interpretation.^b (What it means is that one is not searching for its hidden meanings). And *mâ ya'lamu* (none can

exhaust its): *ta'wīlahu 'illallâh* (*ta'wīlahu* = the discovering, detecting, revealing, developing or disclosing or the explaining, expounding or interpreting of which a thing is or may be reduced or that which it may come to be, [within the framework of the Qur'ânic teachings]), save Allâh. And those firmly rooted in knowledge, they say - 'We believe in it, it is all from our *Rabb*.^c And none will grasp the message except people of understanding.

7a. The verses of the Holy Book are here stated to be partly *Muhkam* (decisive) and partly *Mutashâbih* (allegorical). In 11:1 the whole Qur'ân is spoken of as a *Book whose verses are made plain*, and in 39:23 it is called *kitâb-an Mutashâbih-an, a book, consistent in its injunctions*. A little consideration will show that there is no discrepancy in the three statements; they actually explain each other. Literally, *muhkam* (from *hakama*, meaning *he prevented*, whence *ahkama*, i.e., *he made a thing firm or stable*) is *that of which the meaning is secured from change and alteration*. *Mutashâbih* (from *shibh*, meaning *likeness or resemblance*) is *that which is consimilar or conformable in its various parts*, and *Mutashâbihât* are therefore *things like or resembling one another*, hence *susceptible to different interpretations* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). Therefore when it is stated that the whole of the Book is *muhkam*, the meaning is that all its verses are decisive, and when the Qur'ân is called *Mutashâbih* (39:23), the meaning is that the whole of it is *conformable in its various parts*. In the verse under discussion is laid down the important principle how verses susceptible of different interpretations may be interpreted so that a decisive significance may be attached to them. The Qur'ân, we are here told, establishes certain principles in clear words which are to be taken as the basis, while there are statements made in allegorical words or susceptible to different meanings, the interpretation of which must be in consonance with the other parts and the essence of the Book. In fact, this is true of every-writing. When a certain law is laid down in a book in unmistakable words, any statement carrying a doubtful significance or one which is apparently opposed to the law so laid down must be interpreted subject to the principle enunciated. The subject is very appropriately dealt with here as a prelude to a controversy with the Christians, who attribute divinity to Jesus and uphold the doctrine of atonement by blood on the basis of

certain ambiguous words or allegorical statements, without heeding the fundamental principles established by the earlier prophets.

7b. The *fitnah* is the *misleading* of the people (*Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faïd Murtaḍâ* and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane), or *the sowing of dissension*, or *difference of opinion* (*Al-Qâmûs al-Muḥîṭ* (Dictionary), by *Shaiḫ Majd al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Ya‘qûb Al-Firozâbâdî* and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane), by giving to one part an interpretation which is falsified by another. *Ta‘wîl* (from *aul*, *to return*) is *the final sequel* or *the end* of a thing, or *the interpretation* of what is ambiguous or allegorical, such as the interpretation of dreams, etc. *Kashshâf* (Commentary), by Abu-l-Qâsim Maḥmûd ibn ‘Umar al-Zamakhsharî explains *ta‘wîla-hû* here as meaning *the interpretation which they desire*, and this, according to *Bahr al-Muḥîṭ* (Commentary), by Imâm Athîr al-Dîn Abû ‘Abd Allâh Abû Hayyân al-Undlusî, is the significance; hence the addition in the translation of the words *their own* within brackets. They do not care to seek the real interpretation, which can only be found by referring to the principles laid down elsewhere. But the words may also signify their giving an interpretation to an ambiguous verse *alone*, i.e. without considering it in conjunction with other consimilar verses or the principles laid down elsewhere.

7c. These words afford a clue to the right mode of interpretation. The words *it is all from our Rabb* signify that there is no disagreement between the various portions of the Divine Book. Hence the rule of interpretation which they follow is that they refer passages which are susceptible to various interpretations to those whose meaning is obvious or to consimilar passages, and subject particular statements to general principles. Thus reading various passages in the light of each other, they discover the true significance of ambiguous passages. Hence such people are spoken of as *knowing* the true interpretation of allegorical verses (Bukhârî 65: iii, 2).

8 Our *Rabb*, make not our hearts to deviate after You have guided us and grant us mercy from You; surely You are the most liberal Giver.

9 Our *Rabb*, surely You are the Gatherer of human beings on a day about which there is no doubt. Surely Allâh will not fail in (His) promise.^a

SECTION 2: Unity the Basis of all the guidance that came from Allâh

10 Those who disbelieve, neither their wealth nor their children will avail them aught against Allâh. And they will be fuel for fire^a—

11 As was the case of the people of Pharaoh, and those before them! They rejected Our messages, so Allâh destroyed them on account of their sins.^a And Allâh is Severe in requiting (evil).

9a. There seems to be a reference here to the gathering of the hostile forces in the battles and to Allâh's promise to grant victory to the faithful. The verses that follow leave no doubt; see particularly verse 12.

10a. Verses 10–12 contain a clear prophecy of the vanquishment of the opponents of the Prophet. Though the Quraish had suffered a crushing defeat in the battle of Badr, they could yet muster heavy forces against the Muslims, who were few in numbers. The Muslims were still too weak and in danger of being annihilated by their opponents. They were actually attacked twice again, once in the battle of Uhud and again in the battle of the Allies, with heavy forces which would have crushed the Muslims if they had not received Divine help.

11a. *Dhanb* is originally *the taking the tail of a thing, and it is applied to every act of which the consequence is disagreeable or unwholesome* (Al-Mufradât fî *Gharîb Al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî). According to *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane, *dhanb* means *a sin, a crime, a fault, a transgression, or an act of disobedience*. It is said to differ from *ithm* in being either intentional or committed through inadvertence, whereas *ithm* is particularly intentional (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). It will thus be seen that *dhanb* is a word which carries a wide significance, and is applicable to *all shortcomings resulting from inattention, incapacity, or perversity, and even to defects or imperfections of which the result may be disagreeable*. It covers all shades of shortcomings, from the grossest transgressions of the wicked to those defects and imperfections of which even the righteous cannot be free.

12 Say to those who disbelieve: You shall be vanquished, and driven together to hell; and evil is the resting-place.^a

13 Indeed there was a sign for you in the two hosts (which) met together in encounter — one party fighting in the way of Allâh and the other disbelieving, whom they saw twice as many as themselves with the sight of the eye.^a And Allâh strengthens with His aid whom He pleases. There is a lesson in this for those who have eyes.

12a. This is one of the passages in which the punishment of this life, which is *vanquishment*, is spoken of in the same breath with the punishment of the Hereafter, which is *hell*.

13a. The reference here is to the battle of Badr. The meaning is that the Muslims saw the disbelievers to be twice as many as themselves. The statement does not contradict that made in 8:44: “And when He showed them to you, when you met, as few in your eyes, and He made you to appear few in their eyes”. The actual strength of the two parties was: Quraish about 1,000, Muslims 313. The statement made in this verse is that the Muslims saw the disbelievers to be twice as many as themselves. Therefore they were still fewer in the eyes of the Muslims as compared with their actual strength, and this is what is stated in 8:44. As to why they were shown to the Muslims to be twice as many as themselves, 8:66 helps us to understand: “so if there be of you a hundred steadfast, they shall overcome two hundred; and if there be of you a thousand, they shall overcome two thousand”. The part of the enemy not seen by the Muslims was behind a hillock. The battle of Badr is here stated to be a sign of the truth of the Prophet, not only because of the prophecies of victory contained in the Qur’ân, but also because of the clear prophecy which found its way into the Holy man-made Bible in the book of Isaiah, where, after speaking of a future scene in the land of Arabia (Isaiah 21:13), the prophet goes on to say: “The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought water to him that was thirsty, they prevented with their bread him that fled. For they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword and from the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war. For thus hath the Lord said unto me, within a year, according to the years of an hireling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail. And the residue of the number of archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar, shall be diminished” (Isaiah 21:14–17). Kedar was the son of Ishmael (Genesis 25:13), and the word is used freely in the Bible for the Arab tribe that sprang from him

(Psalms 120:5; Isa. 42:11; 60:7, etc.). There is only one person in history whose flight has become a memorable fact as the beginning of an Era. It was Muḥammad (on whom is peace) who, attended by one faithful companion, fled from the drawn swords of the guard that surrounded his house, and it was after one year from his Flight that the glory of Kedar departed in the battle of Badr which took place in the second year of the Flight. The battle of Badr was thus a sign for the Jews and the Christians as well because of the fulfilment of prophecies in the Bible. The second year after the Flight had not yet come to a close when the power of Kedar was broken at Badr.

14 Fair-seeming to human beings is made the love of desires, of women and sons and hoarded treasures of gold and silver and well-bred horses and cattle and tilth. This is the provision of the life of this world. And Allāh — with Him is the good goal (of life).^a

15 Say: Shall I tell you of what is better than these? For those who guard against evil are Gardens with their *Rabb*, in which rivers flow, to abide in them, and pure companions and Allāh's goodly pleasure.^a And Allāh is Seer of the servants.

16 Those who say: Our *Rabb*, we believe, so forgive our sins and save us from the chastisement of the fire.

17 The patient and the truthful, and the obedient, and those who spend and those who ask Divine protection in the morning times.^a

18 Allāh bears witness that there is no deity but He, and (so do) the *malā'ikah* and those possessed of knowledge,^a maintaining justice.^b There is no deity but He, the Mighty, the Wise.

14a. This verse contrasts the yearnings of the human beings of the world with those of the faithful. We are here told that, though the enjoyments of this life have their attractions, yet the desire to be with Allāh is the goal which the true believer sets before himself. It is by "hoarded treasures of gold and silver" that the Christian nations have been led away from Allāh.

15a. For the companions in paradise see 2:25d. Of the blessings of paradise is Allāh's goodly pleasure, which is elsewhere said to be the greatest of all the blessings of paradise (9:72). The addition of this word here shows that the blessings of paradise are spiritual.

17a. For the meaning of *istighfâr*, see 2:286a. As shown there *istighfâr* is really a prayer to attain to sinlessness. That this is the real significance is shown by its use here. The righteous servants of Allâh are here spoken of as possessing the great qualifications of steadfastness, truthfulness, obedience to Allâh, spending in Allâh's way, and finally as *mustaghfirîn* or resorting to *istighfâr*, which shows that it is one of the highest stages to which the devotional pilgrim aspires.

18a. Allâh bears witness to His Unity through nature, which is His handiwork, and also by His word made known through revelation. The *malâ'ikah* bear witness by their working within human beings whose nature bears testimony to the Divine Unity. Those who have a true knowledge of the holy scriptures of any "religion" also bear testimony to the great truth of the Unity of Allâh. The Unity of Allâh is, in fact, the common principle which is recognized by all "religions". Thus the whole creation, the nature of human beings, and the broad and common principles of all the devotional systems are all at one in declaring the Divine Unity, whereas the Trinity of the Christian faith is but a solitary doctrine which does not find any support either in physical nature or in the nature of human beings or in the way of devotional life of humanity.

18b. The words *maintaining justice* may qualify Allâh as being the true Maintainer of justice. But considering what is said in the next verse as to the injustice of those to whom knowledge was given, it is more likely that the words qualify *those possessed of knowledge*, the meaning being that every possessor of knowledge, to whatever way of life he may belong, bears witness to the grand truth of Divine Unity if he maintains justice in bearing witness.

19 Surely the (true) *Dîn* with Allâh is Islâm.^a And those who were given the Book differed only after knowledge had come to them, out of envy among themselves. And whoever disbelieves in the messages of Allâh — Allâh indeed is Quick at reckoning.

20 But if they dispute with you say: I submit myself entirely to Allâh and (so does) he who follows me. And say to those who have been given the Book and the Unlearned (people): Do you submit yourselves?^a If they submit, then indeed they follow the right way; and if they turn back, your duty is only to deliver the message. And Allâh is Seer of the servants.

19a. An explanation of what Islâm is has already been given in 2:112a. According to the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân, *Islâm* was the *Dîn* of all the prophets. It is particularly mentioned as the *way* of Ibrâhîm several times, and on one occasion the Isrâ'îlite prophets who followed Mûsâ are spoken of as *the prophets who submitted themselves (to Allâh), alladhîna aslamû* (5:44). Not only is Islâm the way of life of every prophet, but, according to the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân, it is also the natural way of life of human beings, as in 30:30 it is described as being “the nature made by Allâh in which He has created human beings”. This is corroborated by a saying of the Prophet: “Every child is born in Islâm: it is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian” (Bukhârî 23:179).

The word *Islâm* does not only signify *submission*, it also signifies *entering into peace*, from *aslama*, meaning *he entered into peace*. In fact, the idea of *peace* is the dominant idea in Islâm, and the goal to which Islâm leads is called *the abode of peace* (10:25).

20a. By the *Unlearned people* are meant *the Arabs*; see 2:78a.

SECTION 3: The Kingdom is Granted to Another People

21 Those who disbelieve in the messages of Allâh and would slay the prophets unjustly and slay those among human beings who enjoin justice, announce to them a painful chastisement.^a

22 Those are they whose works will be of no avail in this world and the Hereafter, and they will have no helpers.^a

23 Have you not seen those who are given a portion of the Book?^a They are invited to the Book of Allâh that it may decide between them, then a party of them turn back and they withdraw.^b

24 This is because they say: The Fire shall not touch us but for a few days; and that which they forge deceives them regarding their *Dîn*.

25 Then how will it be when We gather them together on a day about which there is no doubt. And every *nafs* shall be fully paid what it has earned, and they shall not be wronged?

21a. For *bashshir* see 4:138a. The Jews are specially mentioned as a people who were guilty of trying to kill prophets (2:61), but this reference seems to point to their plans for killing the Holy Prophet, which were, however, all frustrated.

22a. The meaning is that all their attempts against the Prophet will be fruitless, and they themselves will be reduced to a condition of helplessness.

23a. The Jews are spoken of as being given only a portion of the Book, because much of it had already been lost. Moreover, the reconstructed Torah was not a complete law.

23b. Some commentators think that this decision was given in a case of adultery; but there is nothing in the Qur'ân warranting such a limitation. It is, of course, remarkable, as Sale has noticed, that while the law of Moses as now preserved in Leviticus 20:10 mentions simply *putting to death*, as the punishment for adultery, John 8:5 gives us to understand that *stoning to death* was the real punishment, and the Prophet is also said to have stated stoning to be the punishment prescribed for adultery by the Jewish law, though the rabbis refused to accept the judgement of their own law. It seems to be a clear instance of alteration.

The reference here, however, is to the broad principles of the devotional life regarding which the Jews, or the Jews and the Christians, differed. The *Book of Allâh* is the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân which gave a decision in the differences between the Jews and the Christians.

26 Say: O Allâh, Owner of the Kingdom, You give the kingdom to whom You please, and take away the kingdom from whom You please, and You exalt whom You please and abase whom You please. In Your hand is the good. Surely, You are Possessor of power over all things.

27 You make the night to pass into the day and You make the day to pass into the night; and You bring forth the living from the dead and You bring forth the dead from the living; and You give sustenance to whom You please without measure.^a

28 Let not the believers take the disbelievers for friends rather than believers.^a And whoever does this has no connection with Allâh — except that you guard yourselves against them,^b guarding carefully. And Allâh cautions you against His retribution.^c And to Allâh is the eventual coming.

27a. Verses 26, 27 apparently refer to the fact that kingdom and honor shall be given now to another nation, whose night shall be made to pass into a day of triumph. It is on account of having failed to grasp their real significance that Rodwell thinks that these verses are misplaced here, “interrupting as they do the connection of the preceding and subsequent verses”. The connection is clear. The Jews had already been warned by Jesus that “the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof” (Matthew 21:43). A living nation of Muslims was brought forth from among the dead Arabs, and the living nation of Isrâ’îlites was represented now by a people who were devotionally⁵ dead. Compare 4:54: “But indeed We have given to Ibrâhîm’s children the Book and the Wisdom, and We have given them a grand kingdom”.

28a. The Muslims, being in a state of war with the disbelievers, were forbidden to look to their enemies to guard their interests or for help of any kind. The clear statement made in 60:8, 9 settles the point beyond all doubt: “Allâh forbids you not respecting those who fight you not for “religion”, nor drive you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly. ...Allâh forbids you only respecting those who fight you for “religion” and drive you forth from your homes and help (others) in your expulsion, that you make friends with them”. *Auliya*’, which I translate as *friends* here, is the plural of *walî*, which is derived from a root meaning *he held command* or *had charge of* or *superintended a thing*, and it accordingly means *the manager of a thing* or *of the affairs of another*, and the *guardian* or *maintainer of an orphan*, and the *guardian of a woman* who gives her away in marriage. It also means *the executor* or *heir of a deceased person* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). According to *Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur’ân* (Dictionary of Qur’ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî, it indicates *nearness in respect of place, relation, and dîn*, and *in respect of friendship and help and belief*, etc. The word therefore includes all relations or nearness. A human being may also be said to be *walî-Allâh*, as meaning one *near to Allâh* or a *friend of Allâh*.

28b. This is a new sentence. It is as if it were said: *Do not look to them for guarding your interests, rather guard yourselves against them.*

5 : Meaning that they had no knowledge of the Creator.

28c. The *Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muḥibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faïd Murtaḍâ* explains *nafs* here as meaning *uqûbah*, i.e. *retribution*. In fact, retribution of evil is a requirement of Divine nature. Or, the meaning is that Allâh warns you against disobedience to Himself.

29 Say: Whether you hide what is in your hearts or manifest it, Allâh knows it. And He knows whatever is in the *samâwât* and whatever is in the earth. And Allâh is Possessor of power over all things.

30 On the day when every *nafs* will find present that which it has done of good; and that which it has done of evil — it will wish that between it and that (evil) there were a long distance. And Allâh cautions you against His retribution. And Allâh is Compassionate to the servants.

SECTION 4: Last Members of a Chosen Race

31 Say: If you love Allâh, follow me: Allâh will love you,^a and grant you protection from your sins. And Allâh is Forgiving, Merciful.

31a. The love of Allâh is the great goal of life to which Islâm leads. Compare John 14:15, 16: “If ye love me keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you for ever”; and John 15:10: “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love”. This Comforter appeared in the person of the Holy Prophet. Elsewhere the Jews and the Christians are mentioned as calling themselves “the sons of Allâh and His beloved ones” (5:18). They are told that they could become the beloved ones of Allâh by following the Prophet.

32 Say: Obey Allâh and the Messenger; but if they turn back, Allâh surely loves not the disbelievers.

33 Truly Allâh chose Âdam and Nûḥ and the descendants of Ibrâhîm and the descendents of ‘Imrân above the nations,^a

34 Offspring, one of the other. And Allâh is Hearing, Knowing.^a

35 When a woman of ‘Imrân^a said: My *Rabb*, I vow to You what is in my womb, to be devoted (to Your service), so accept (it) from me; surely You, only You, are the Hearing, the Knowing.

33a. With this section begins the story of nabî ‘Îsâ who has been renamed by the Christians as “Jesus Christ”, the central figure of the Christian “religion”, and as a preliminary we are told that if ‘Îsâ was chosen by Allâh so were his great ancestors, Âdam and Nûḥ. The descendants of Ibrâhîm and ‘Imrân, are then spoken of, as having been chosen above the nations. For the choice of the descendants of Ibrâhîm, see 2:124a. They are divided into two branches, the Isrâ’îlites and the Ismâ’îlites. The former are here spoken of as the descendants of ‘Îmrân. The descendants of ‘Imrân are Mûsâ and Hârûn. Mûsâ became the founder of the Isrâ’îlite law and Hârûn the head of the Isrâ’îlite priesthood. The last of this race were Yahyâ and ‘Îsâ. Their parents are first spoken of here, viz. Zakariyyâ and Maryam.

34a. Nûḥ was a descendant of Âdam, Ibrâhîm a descendant of Nûḥ, and ‘Imrân and his descendants were the offspring of Ibrâhîm, not a separate race. The reason for mentioning them separately is twofold: (1) the immediate descendants of ‘Imrân became the founders of a great law in Isrâ’îl and the Isrâ’îlite nation had, in fact, received a new birth with them, and (2) it was with the descendants of ‘Imrân that the Mûsâic dispensation came to an end.

35a. *Imra’at* means *a woman* and also *a wife*. I take *imra’at* ‘Imrân as meaning *a woman of the family of ‘Imrân*, because the name of a great ancestor is frequently used to indicate the nation which has sprung from him. Thus Kedar stands for the Ismâ’îlites and Isrâ’îl for the Isrâ’îlites. This interpretation is in perfect accord with what is said in the previous verse as to the election of the descendants of ‘Imrân. The general statement is followed by a particular instance. The second instance also relates to one of the descendants of ‘Imrân, viz. Yahyâ, who was also of “priestly descent through both parents” (Bible Dictionary, Cambridge University Press). The world know very little regarding the parentage of Maryam, yet the fact that she was, according to the only tradition that we have about her, devoted to the Temple from three to twelve years of age, shows clearly that she belonged to the priestly class. She is elsewhere called *the sister of Hârûn* (19:28) and not a sister of Mûsâ, for priesthood was an exclusive prerogative of

the descendants of *Hârûn*. In the Semitic languages the words *ab* (father), *umm* (mother), *akh* (brother), and *ukht* (sister) are used in a broad sense, and do not necessarily always imply the very close relations of real father, mother, brother, and sister. Thus we have a saying of the Prophet in which he speaks of himself as *the prayer of my father Ibrâhîm*. According to the reconstructed man-made Bible Jesus was also addressed as “son of David”. According to tradition, however, ‘Imrân was the name of Maryam’s father, and therefore the words *imra’t ‘Imrân* may mean *the wife of ‘Imrân*.

36 So when she brought it forth, she said: My *Rabb*, I have brought it forth a female — and Allâh knew best what she brought forth^a — and the male is not like the female, and I have named it Maryam, and I commend her and her offspring into Your protection from the accursed *shaitân*.^b

37 So her *Rabb* accepted her with a goodly acceptance and made her grow up a goodly growing, and gave her into the charge of Zakariyyâ. Whenever Zakariyyâ entered the sanctuary to (see) her, he found food with her. He said: O Maryam, from where comes this to you? She said: It is from Allâh. Surely Allâh gives to whom He pleases without measure.^a

36a. The words *and Allâh knew best what she brought forth* are parenthetical. She had vowed the child to be devoted to the service of the Temple, but a female could not do the priestly work.

36b. *Rajîm* is derived from the root *rajm*, meaning the *throwing* or *casting of stones*, and also *reviling*, *cursing*, *driving away*, *expelling*, *cutting off from friendly intercourse* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). It therefore signifies *accursed* or *driven away from the Divine presence*. This is what is implied here, and this is apparent from 38:78, where *Shaitân* is thus accosted: “And surely My curse is on you to the day of Judgment”. The other significance of *rajîm*, i.e., *one pelted with stones*, is not applicable here. It is noteworthy that Maryam’s mother while praying for Maryam prays also for her *offspring*, which shows that when she dedicated her daughter to the Temple she had never an idea that she would remain a *virgin* all her life. On the other hand, she entertained the hope that Maryam would become a wife and mother.

37a. There is nothing extraordinary in Maryam's reply to Zakariyyâ's question. The reply that she got sustenance *from Allâh* is the reply of every devout person who believes that Allâh is the sustainer of all, and that therefore all provision or sustenance comes from Him. As elsewhere: "And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We send it not down but in a known measure" (15:21). Maryam being attached to the Temple, the worshippers would naturally bring gifts to her, and as it was through Divine grace that she received these gifts, she said that it was Allâh Who gave her these things.

38 There did *Zakariyyâ* pray to his *Rabb*. He said: My *Rabb*, grant me from You goodly offspring; surely You are the Hearer of prayer.^a

39 So the *Malâ'ikah* (the *medium* with which Allâh communicates and interacts with human beings) called to him as he stood praying in the sanctuary: Allâh gives you the good news of *Yahyâ*,^a verifying a word from Allâh,^b and honourable and chaste and a prophet from among the good ones.

40 He said: My *Rabb*, how can I have a son when old age has already come upon me, and my wife is barren? He said: Even thus does Allâh do what He pleases.^a

41 He said: My *Rabb*, appoint a sign for me. Said He: Your sign is that you speak not to men for three days except by signs.^a And remember your *Rabb* much and glorify (Him) in the evening and early morning.

38a. The devoutness of Maryam raised in Zakariyyâ a yearning for such virtuous offspring. Elsewhere he is described as praying for a son who should inherit the great qualities of Ya'qûb, and in whom Allâh might be well-pleased (19:6).

39a. The Arabic word is *Yahyâ* (being from the root *hayât*, i.e. *life*), meaning *he shall live*. The Arabic Glorious Qur'ân elsewhere states that Zakariyyâ prayed to Allâh, saying, *I fear my kinsfolk after me*, (19:5) the fear being no doubt due to their leading unrighteous lives. Hence the significance underlying the name *Yahyâ* was that *he would not die in sin* like his other relations. *Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî gives the same explanation: *He gave him this name (Yahyâ) because sin was not to bring about his death*.

39b. The promise given to Zakariyyâ was a word from Allâh, and *Yahyâ* was the verifier of that word, because his birth brought about the fulfillment of the prophecy. A word

from Allâh, therefore, stands for a *Divine prophecy*; see also 6:34; 10:64. Somewhat similar to this explanation is the one given by Abû ‘Ubaidah who interprets *kalimat-in min-Allâh* as meaning a *book from Allâh* (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). In 66:12, speaking of Maryam, it is said: “And she accepted the truth (*saddaqt*) of the words of her *Rabb* and His Books, and she was of the obedient ones”. Just as *Yahyâ* is the verifier (*muṣaddiq*) of a word from Allâh, Maryam is the verifier of the words of her *Rabb*, meaning clearly the prophetic words of her *Rabb*. One other significance of the word *kalimah* as used in the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân is the creation of Allâh. Thus in 18:109 we have: “If the sea were ink for the words of my *Rabb*, the sea would surely be exhausted before the words of my *Rabb* were exhausted, though We brought the like of it to add thereto”. A similar statement is made in 31:27, and in both places it is clear that the words of the *Rabb* signify His creation.

40a. There is no disbelief on the part of Zakariyyâ. It is simply an expression of wonder as to how a son can be born to him, for he had already reached a very old age.

SECTION 5: Birth of ‘Îsâ and His Ministry

42 And when the *Malâ’ikah* said: O Maryam, surely Allâh has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the world.

43 O Maryam, be obedient to your *Rabb* and humble yourself and bow down with those who bow.^a

41a. The Qur’ân does not say that Zakariyyâ became dumb. He was only commanded not to talk to men for three days, remembering Allâh much during the time.

43a. After speaking of Maryam’s birth (verse 36) and her growing up in righteousness in the temple under the care of Zakariyyâ (verse 37), the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân now speaks of her election just as the righteous before her were elected. Evidently this refers to a time when she had grown up to the age of puberty and left the temple.

44 This is of the tidings of things unseen which We reveal to you. And you was not with them when they cast their pens (to decide) which of them should have Maryam in his charge, and you was not with them when they contended one with another.^a

44a. The commentators think that the reference is to verse 37 when Maryam as a child was dedicated to the temple and that lots were then cast as a result of which Maryam was given into the charge of Zakariyyâ. But this is quite out of place. The Arabic Glorious Qur'ân has described her history in the natural order. Her mother conceives her (verse 35); she is born and named (verse 36); she is dedicated to and resides in the temple under the charge of Zakariyyâ (verse 37). Here follows the narration of Zakariyyâ praying for a righteous son when he sees the devoutness of Maryam and verses 38–41 are, as it were, parenthetical. The story of Maryam is again taken up in verse 42 where her election is spoken of, which is undoubtedly the time when she attained to the age of discretion (verses 42, 43). Verse 44 cannot therefore refer back to her history as a child in the temple. In the natural order it refers to a much later period. It will be noted that when Maryam's mother prayed for her at her birth (verse 36), she also prayed for her offspring and therefore she had evidently in mind the time when Maryam would be married and become a mother. Verse 45 clearly gives Maryam news of the birth of a child and therefore the particular incident referred to in verse 44 is the incident of her espousal. The casting of lots and the contention as to who should have her in his charge could not mean anything but her charge as a wife. According to the reconstructed man-made Bible: in the book of Luke 1:26, 27 makes it clear that Mary received the news of the birth of Jesus after her espousal with Joseph. In view of all these considerations, verse 44 cannot be taken but as referring to the espousal of Maryam. Lots were evidently cast because as a child she had been dedicated to the temple, and it was now by a lot only that she could be given away in marriage. Maryam's history as narrated in the reconstructed Gospels casts no light on these circumstances and hence the verse starts with the statement that this was an announcement *relating to the unseen*. In fact, the whole history of Maryam and 'Îsâ was enveloped in darkness until the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân announced their right position as two righteous servants of Allâh and rejected both extreme views, the Jewish view that 'Îsâ was conceived in sin and was illegitimate and the Christian view that he was God or Son of God Who had entered Mary's womb. He was only what the Prophet described him to be in his controversy with the Najrân deputation when he said to them: "Do you not know that 'Îsâ was conceived by a woman in the manner in which all women conceive? Then she was delivered of him as women are delivered of their

children? Then he was fed as children are fed. Then he ate food and drank water and answered the call of nature (as all mortals do)?” The deputation replied to all these questions in the affirmative, on which the Prophet said: “Then how can your claim (that he was God or Son of God) be true?” (*Jâmi‘ al-Bayân fî Tafsîr al-Qur’ân* (Commentary), by Imâm Abû Ja‘far Muḥammad *ibn Jarîr al-Ṭabarî*). The Prophet’s clear arguments which even the Christian deputation could not question settle the matter that ‘Îsâ was conceived in the ordinary manner and that Maryam became a wife and mother in the ordinary way.

45 When the *malâ’ikah* said: O Maryam, surely Allâh gives you good news with a word from Him^a (of one) whose name is the *Masîḥ*, ‘Îsâ, son of Maryam,^b worthy of regard in this world and the Hereafter, and of those who are drawn nigh (to Allâh),^c

45a. The words *bi-kalimat-in min-hu* mean either *with a word from Him* or *of a word from Him*, but as *kalimah* means *word* or *prophecy*, and as the personal pronoun in *ismu-hû* stands for the masculine gender, while *kalimah* is in the feminine gender and requires the personal pronoun *hâ*, the first meaning is adopted. The good news was given by means of a prophetic word from the Divine Being. Compare 15:54, 55, where Ibrâhîm’s question is answered thus: “They said, We give you good news with truth,” where the object is understood, as in the words under discussion, the significance being *we give you good news* (of a son) *with truth*. For further explanation of what is meant by *kalimah*, see 39b and 66:12a.

Commenting on verse 39, the *Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al Dîn Râzî observes: “The announcement (of ‘Îsâ’s advent) had been made in the books of the prophets before him, so when he came it was said, *This is that prophetic word*, and so he was called a *word*.” In support of this he cites instances of such phrases as *jâ’a qaulî* and *jâ’a kalâmî*, i.e. “my word came” or “my speech came”, when an event foretold by a person happens, the real significance of the phrases being *that which I said* or *that of which I spoke has come about*. This explanation shows that *kalimah* really applies to the prophecy.

One of the explanations given by the *Al-Mufradât fî Ḡharîb al-Qur’ân* (Dictionary of Qur’ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Ḥusain *al-Râghib al-Isfahânî* is that ‘Îsâ is here

called a *kalimah* in the same sense as the Prophet is called *dhikr* (lit., a Reminder) in 65:10.

45b. Three names are given for the child — *Al-Masîh*, *‘Îsâ*, and *Ibn Maryam*. The first of these is more a title than a name, being preceded by *al*. The literal significance of *Masîh* is either *one who travels much* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). *‘Îsâ* is said to have been so called because *he used to travel much* (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî and the *Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur’ân* (Dictionary of Qur’ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî), or because *he was anointed with a pure blessed ointment with which the prophets are anointed* (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). It is, however, the first significance, viz., that *Masîh* means *one who travels much* that finds the foremost acceptance with the commentators as well as the lexicologists, and this lends support to the evidence recently discovered which shows that *‘Îsâ* travelled in the East after his unfortunate experience at the hands of the Syrian Jews, and preached to the lost ten tribes of the Isrâ’îlites who had settled in the East, in Afghanistan and Kashmir.

‘Îsâ is the Arabic name of the last Isrâ’îlite prophet. There exists a great problem to establish from what language did the name *Yoshua* was derived because Hebrew was only created during the Greek period in Palestine. Jesus being the Greek name which fits nowhere in the Isrâ’îlites tradition; and *Ibn Maryam*, is a surname. It is remarkable that the Qur’ân makes no mention at all of Maryam’s husband, and in this respect, these circumstances bear a strong resemblance to those connected with Mûsâ’s birth, for there, too, no mention at all is made of Mûsâ’s father. The mere fact, therefore, that there is no mention of *‘Îsâ*’s father is not sufficient to show that *‘Îsâ* had no father. Moreover, according to the reconstructed Gospels of his two parents Joseph and Mary, Mary was undoubtedly much more well-known than Joseph.

45c. Those drawn nigh to Allâh are not necessarily the *Malâ’ikah*, as some have thought. Compare 56:7–11, where men are divided into three classes, one of these being *those drawn nigh*, the same word *muqarrabîn* being used in both cases. Hence *‘Îsâ* is here placed only in the foremost line of the righteous servants of Allâh.

46 And he will speak to the people when in the cradle and when of old age, and (he will be) one of the good ones.^a

47 She said: My *Rabb*, how can I have a son and man has not yet touched me?^a He said: Even so; Allâh creates what He pleases. When He decrees a matter, He only says to it, Be, and it is.

48 “And He will teach him the Book and the Wisdom and the *Taurât* and the *Injîl*:

46a. ‘Îsâ throughout the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân is spoken of as “one of those drawn nigh,” “one of the righteous,” thus showing that he is regarded only as one of the prophets. As to speaking in the cradle and when of old age, neither of them can be considered a miracle. Every healthy child which is not dumb begins to talk when in the cradle, and *speaking when of old age* also shows that this speaking is the ordinary experience of every human being who is healthy, and lives to an old age. The good news consists in the fact that the child announced will be a healthy child and shall not die in childhood. According to *Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî, the reason for mentioning ‘Îsâ speaking in childhood and old age is *to show the change of condition of ‘Îsâ from childhood to old age, while change in the Divine Being is impossible*.

Kahl is, according to *Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur’ân* (Dictionary of Qur’ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî, *he in whose hair hoariness or greyness has become intermixed*. *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane has, on the authority of *Al-Misbâh al-Munîr fî Gharîb al-Sharh al-Kabîr* (Dictionary), by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alî al-Muqrî al-Fayûmî, and *Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by Imâm Muḥibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faîd Murtaḍâ, and *Mughnî al-Labîb* (Grammar), by Al-Shaikh Jamâl al-Dîn ibn Hishâm Al-Ansârî, that a man is *kahl* after he has attained the limit of being a *shâbb*, which is variously fixed at 32, 40 and 51 years. The same authority gives the meaning of *kahl* as of *middle age*, or *between that age and the period when his hair has become intermixed with hoariness*. It would thus appear that, according to the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân, ‘Îsâ did not die at thirty-three years of age, but lived to a sufficiently old age.

47a. Only her espousal had yet been decided, and perhaps she had not been informed of this when she was given the good news of a son being born to her. Hence she says that man had not touched her yet. And she was told in reply, “Even so”; i.e., the child will be born by Allâh bringing about the circumstances which result in the birth of a child. The

words do not show that she would conceive out of the ordinary course of nature, for there is no doubt that Maryam had other children, which no one supposes to have been conceived out of the ordinary course of nature. Nor do the words that follow prove anything beyond the simple fact that Maryam must give birth to a son in accordance with the prophecy. The whole of creation is brought about, we are told again and again, by the Divine word *Kun* ('Be'), yet no one supposes that creation is not brought about according to the laws of nature.

49: And (make him) a messenger to the Children of Isrâ'îl (saying): I have come to you with a sign from your *Rabb*, that I determine for you out of dust the form of a bird (i.e. out of the people who were of the evil lowly type), then I *nafakha* (advance) into it (i.e. them) and it (i.e. they) becomes (like) a bird (meaning above the transgressors) with Allâh's permission, and I heal the blind (i.e. those who were blind to the truth) and the leprous (i.e. those who were inflicted with evil inclinations), and bring the dead (i.e. those of whom it was thought that they would never return to the path of truth) to life with Allâh's permission; and I inform you of what you should eat and what you should store in your houses. Surely there is a sign in this for you, if you are believers."

49a. To understand the significance of this passage it is necessary to bear in mind that the chief characteristic of 'Îsâ's speeches is that he spoke in parables and preferred to clothe his ideas in allegorical language. If this is kept in mind, there is no difficulty in interpreting this passage. The first of the statements in this passage speaks of the making of birds and breathing into them. It is perfectly intelligible if taken as a parable, but quite incomprehensible as a statement of fact. If on the one hand a prophet's dignity is much above such actions as the making of toy birds, on the other the act of creation is not attributable to any but the Divine Being. To understand this parable, however, the several words used may be explained first. In the passage under discussion four words require to be explained: *khalq*, *tîn*, *nafkh*, and *tair*. The primary significance of *khalq* is *measuring, proportioning*, synonym *taqdîr* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane); hence *khalq* comes to signify the mere act of *the determining of a thing*. The word was used in this sense in pre-Islâmic poetry. The act of *khalq* in the sense of creation cannot be attributed to any being except Allâh. The Arabic Glorious Qur'ân has laid the greatest stress upon this point. It again and again speaks of the Divine Being as *the Creator of*

everything, so that there is nothing of which anyone else may be said to be a creator. And of those who are taken as deities by any people, it says in particular that *they do not create anything, while they are themselves created* (16:20; 25:3).

Then there are the two words *ṭīn* and *nafkh*. Human beings is spoken of as being created from *ṭīn* or *dust*, which stands for his humble origin, but the *nafkh* or *breathing* into him makes him deserving of respect by the *malâ'ikah*. This, while hinted at on various occasions, is clearly stated in 38:71, 72: "When your *Rabb* said to the *malâ'ikah*: Surely I am going to create a mortal from dust. So when I have (justly) adapted and expanded it (the component parts of the mortal) by My divine inspiration, and grow submissively (according to Allâh's divine scheme)". Thus it is by the divine inspiration which human beings receives that they may achieve the desired status.

The word *ṭair* or *ṭâ'ir* means *a bird*, but just as the word *asad* (lit., *a lion*) is metaphorically used for *a brave man*, in a parable it is quite unobjectionable to take the word *ṭair* as signifying *one who soars into the higher devotional regions and is not bent low upon earth or earthly things*. In 6:38 it is said: "And there is no animal in the earth, nor a bird that flies on its two wings, but (they are) communities like yourselves", the meaning apparently being that among human beings there are those who only walk upon the earth and do not rise above their earthly concerns, while others soar into the higher devotional regions. Elsewhere (7:179; 25:44), those who having hearts do not understand, and having ears do not hear, are likened to cattle. So what is meant here is that 'Îsâ, by receiving divine inspiration, will make them rise above those who are bent low upon the earth, and the apostles of 'Îsâ, who were all men of humble origin (which is referred to in the word *dust* in the parable), whose thoughts had never risen higher than their own humble cares, left everything for the master's sake and went into the world by the command of the master preaching the truth. Here was, no doubt, mere dust having the form of a bird, which the messenger of Allâh converted into high-soaring birds by delivering the truth contained in the divine inspiration to them. The fact that a story of 'Îsâ making birds is related in a Gospel of Infancy is in no way a bar to this explanation, for it is very likely that a parable was misunderstood by the writer of that Gospel, and the Qur'ân has only referred to it to cast light upon the truth.

49b. The miracle of ‘Îsâ healing the sick has been rationally explained in the *Enc. Bib.* by the Rev. T.K. Cheyne, who has shown that all the stories of healing of the sick have arisen from the devotional healing of the sick, as in Matt. 9:12; “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick”; and as in Jesus’ message to John the Baptist: “The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them” (Matthew 11:5). The concluding words clearly show that the sick and the lame and the blind belong to the same category as the poor to whom the Gospel is preached, being the poor in heart. Compare also Matthew 13:15: “For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.” Here the *healing* cannot refer but to healing of the spiritual diseases. The Arabic Glorious Qur’ân gives an explanation of the healing of the sick when, speaking of itself, it says that it is “a healing for what is in the breasts” (10:57), i.e. for the devotional diseases. The prophet’s healing is about devotional matters, not healing of the physical diseases. The Qur’ân speaks of the blind and the deaf frequently, but it never means those who have lost the senses of seeing and hearing.

49c. Last, come those who are dead. The Qur’ân says plainly that those who die are not sent back to this world: “Allâh takes (human being’s) *nafs* at the time of their death, and those that die not, during their sleep. Then He withholds those on whom He has passed the decree of death and sends the others back till an appointed term” (39:42). And again speaking of the dead: “And before them is a barrier, until the day they are raised” (23:100). But the use of the word *mautâ*, i.e. *the dead*, and of their *being raised to life*, is frequent in the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân in a devotional sense: “Is he who was dead, then We raised him to life ... like him whose likeness is that of one in darkness” (6:122). And again: “O you who believe, respond to Allâh and His Messenger, when He calls you to that which gives you life” (8:24). Similarly we have: “Neither are the living and the dead alike. Surely Allâh makes whom He pleases hear, and you can not make those hear who are in the graves” (35:22). The prophets are raised only for quickening to life those who are devotionally dead, and it is to this quickening through ‘Îsâ that the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân refers here. It should be noted that three classes of human beings are spoken of as being regenerated, viz.: (1) those who were found in the natural state of dust, and who,

like dust, humbly submitted themselves to the prophets' handling, and who were made to soar high into the devotional regions, not caring for their worldly concerns, (2) those who were devotionally diseased, and they were healed and made whole, and (3) those who were quite dead and were devotionally quickened. Hence, there are three different descriptions.

49d. 'Îsâ's preaching laid special stress upon not having any care "for the morrow", and his advice to rich men when they came to him was to sell all that they had. He would have them lay up treasures in the *samâ'*. It is to this aspect of his teaching that the verse refers. They were not to devote their lives to the amassing of riches.

50 And (I am) a verifier of that which is before me of the *Taurât*, and I allow you part of that which was forbidden to you;^a and I have come to you with a sign from your *Rabb*, so keep your duty to Allâh and obey me.

51 Surely Allâh is my *Rabb* and your *Rabb*, so serve Him. This is the right path.

52 But when 'Îsâ perceived disbelief on their part, he said: Who will be my helpers in Allâh's way? The disciples^a said: We are Allâh's helpers: we believe in Allâh, and bear thou witness that we are submitting ones.

53 Our *Rabb*, we believe in that which You have revealed and we follow the messenger, so write us down with those who bear witness.

54 And (the Jews) planned and Allâh (also) planned.^a And Allâh is the best of planners.^b

50a. The law given by Mûsâ was upheld by all the Isrâ'îlite prophets, but its deficiencies were removed and other changes introduced from time to time to make it suit the needs of new times. These changes are particularly marked out in Jesus' teaching, as anyone who reads any of the reconstructed Gospels, and especially the Sermon on the Mount, can easily see.

52a. The Arabic word *hawâriyyûn* is plural of *hawârî*, which is thus explained by the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane: "One who whitens clothes by washing and beating them. Hence its plural, *hawâriyyûn*, is applied to the companions of 'Îsâ, because their trade was to do washing (*Al-Muhkam wa-l-Muhîl al-A'zam* (Dictionary), by 'Alî ibn Ismâ'îl ibn Sîdah and the *Al-Misbâh al-Munîr fî Gharîb al-Sharh al-Kabîr* (Dictionary), by Ahmad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alî al-Muqrî al-Fayûmî)." Some

commentators, however, suggest that they may have been called so because of the purity of their hearts.

54a. *Makr* is explained by *Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî as *the turning of another with ingenuity or skill from that which he aims at*, and he considers *makr* as of two sorts, *a good one* and *an evil one*. Therefore the best interpretation of the word *makara* (including both sorts) is that adopted by the *Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faîd Murtaḍâ*, viz. *he exercised craft, cunning, art, or skill in the management or ordering of affairs with excellent consideration or deliberation, and ability to manage according to his own free will* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The idea of the plan being contrived for an evil purpose or clandestinely, which is included in the significance of the word, has led many to take that idea as its exclusive significance, which is not the case. *Makara-llâhu* may also signify that *Allâh recompensed or requited them for their makr* (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faîd Murtaḍâ* and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). According to some, *its original significance is the gathering of an affair and its strengthening* (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by *Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî*). All these explanations show that it is the equivalent of the word *plan*, the good or evil nature of the plan being dependent on the object or doer's intention. *Allâh* is called here *Khair al-mâkirîn* or the *Best of planners*, the qualifying word *khair* being inapplicable to an evil object.

SECTION 6: 'Îsâ Cleared of False Charges

55 When Allâh said: O 'Îsâ, I will cause you to die^a and exalt you in My presence^b and clear you of those who disbelieve^c and make those who follow you above those who disbelieve to the day of Resurrection.^d Then to Me is your return, so I shall decide between you concerning that wherein you differ.^e

54b. The Jews planned to put 'Îsâ to death by crucifixion, and Allâh made a plan to frustrate their plans; and Allâh's plan was successful, i.e. he was saved from death on the cross, for which see 55a below and 4:157a.

55a. ‘*Abd Allâh ibn ‘Abbâs* (Companion) says that the significance of *mutawaffî-ka* is *mumîtu-ka*, i.e. *I will cause you to die*. According to *Lisân al-‘Arab* (Dictionary), by ‘Allâmah Abu-l-Fadl Jamâl al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Mukarram: “You say *tawaffâ-hu-llâhu* when you mean *Allâh took his nafs* or *caused him to die*”. And according to *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane, it signifies “Allâh took his *nafs* (*Al-Sihâh Tâj al-Lughah wa Sihâh al-‘Arabiyyah* (Dictionary) by Ismâ’il ibn Hammâd al-Jawharî and *Al-Qâmûs al-Muḥîṭ* (Dictionary), by Shaikh Majd al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Ya‘qûb Al-Firozâbâdî) (either at death or in sleep, see the Qur’ân, 6:60); or *caused him to die* (*Al-Misbâh al-Munîr fî Gharîb al-Sharḥ al-Kabîr* (Dictionary), by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alî al-Muqrî al-Fayûmî)”. No other significance can be attached to the words when thus used. Some commentators say that ‘Îsâ remained dead for three hours; others say for seven hours, and so on (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). But the word is used here really to show that the Jewish plans to cause ‘Îsâ’s death on the cross would be frustrated and that he would afterwards die a natural death; see 4:157a. Pickthall’s translation is, O ‘Îsâ, *I am gathering you*, and this is the Biblical idiom for causing to die. Yûsuf ‘Alî, in his first edition, translated the words as meaning *I will cause thee to die*, but in the second edition he changed it to *I will take thee*.

55b. *Raf‘* signifies *raising* or *elevating*, and also *exalting* or *making honourable* (*Tâj al-‘Arûs* (Dictionary), by Imâm Muḥibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faîḍ Murtaḍâ and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). But where the *raf‘* of a man to Allâh is spoken of in the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân, or in the devotional literature of Islâm, it is always in the latter sense, for raising a man in his body to Himself implies that the Divine Being is limited to a place. This is made plain by the prayer which every Muslim repeats several times daily in his prayers in the sitting position between the two prostrations: *wa-rfa‘-nî*, meaning *and exalt me*. Of course no one supposes this prayer to be for the raising of the body to the *samâwât*. Hence, even those commentators who are predisposed, having, no doubt, been misled by Christian tradition, to accept ‘Îsâ as having been raised alive to the *samâ’*, have been compelled to admit that the word *raf‘* is here used not for raising aloft but for *exalting and honouring*. And commenting on the words which follow this statement, *Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî says: *This shows that raf‘ here is the exalting in degree and in praise, not in place and direction.*

The *exaltation* of ‘Îsâ is mentioned here as a reply to the Jews, whose object was to make him die an accursed and ignominious death on the cross.

55c. *Clear thee of those who disbelieve* signifies clearing ‘Îsâ of the false charges relating to the alleged illegitimacy of his birth, and so on, charges of which ‘Îsâ was cleared by the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân; see 4:156a.

55d. This verse contains four promises relating to ‘Îsâ’s triumph over his enemies as against their plans, three of which have already been noticed, viz.: (1) his being saved from death on the cross and being made to die a natural death; (2) his being made honourable in the Divine presence, whereas the object of the Jews was to show that he was an accursed person; (3) his being cleared of all false charges. And the fourth promise is that those who follow ‘Îsâ shall be made dominant over his rejectors till the day of Judgment. The truth of this fourth prophecy is witnessed to this day in the dominance of the Christians over the Jews.

55e. Differences of belief are dealt with in the life after death while transgressions in deeds when they are on a very large scale are punished even in this life.

56 Then as to those who disbelieve, I shall chastise them with severe chastisement in this world and the Hereafter, and they will have no helpers.^a

57 And as to those who believe and do good deeds, He will pay them fully their rewards. And Allâh loves not the unjust.^a

58 This We recite to you of the messages and the Reminder full of wisdom.

59 The likeness of ‘Îsâ with Allâh is truly as the likeness of Âdam. He created him from dust, then said to him, Be, and he was.^a

56a. The whole Jewish history, especially after the seventh century, is a standing testimony to the truth of these words.

57a. By the *unjust* are meant the Christians because they have exceeded the limits of justice and deified ‘Îsâ.

59a. Âdam stands for human beings generally, because *all human beings are created from dust*. Thus in 18:37 the believer says to his non-believing companion: “Disbelieve you in Him Who created you of dust?” And in 22:5 and 30:20, and elsewhere, all human beings are spoken of as having been created from dust. All that is meant, therefore, is that

‘Îsâ is no more than a mortal, and that it is an error to take him for Allâh, as the Christians do. The words *Kun fa-yakûnu* lend support to this meaning, for in these words is spoken of throughout the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân the general and recurring law of creation.

If Âdam be taken as a proper name, the meaning would be that just as Âdam was created from dust and then chosen or purified by Allâh, so was ‘Îsâ created from dust, and his election was similar to the election of Âdam, the command contained in *kun* in this case referring to the election of a righteous servant of Allâh. In either case there is no reference to ‘Îsâ being brought into existence without the agency of a male parent. The controversy is here carried on with the Christians, and it is their false belief in the divinity of ‘Îsâ that is here condemned. As for the parentage of ‘Îsâ see 44a and 47a.

60 (This is) the truth from your *Rabb*, so be not of the disputers.

61 Whoever then disputes with you in this matter after the knowledge that has come to you, say: Come! Let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our people and your people, then let us be earnest in prayer,^a and invoke the curse of Allâh on the liars.^b

62 Surely this is the true account, and there is no deity but Allâh. And Allâh! He surely is the Mighty, the Wise.

63 But if they turn away, then surely Allâh knows the mischief-makers.

SECTION 7: Controversy with Jews and Naṣârâh

64 Say: O People of the Book, come to *sawâ-in* (i.e. an *equitable*, or a *just*, or *right*, or *proposition*) word between us and you, that we shall serve none but Allâh and *that we shall not associate aught with Him*, and *that some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allâh*. But if they turn away, then say: Bear witness, we are Muslims.^a

61a. *Ibtahala* means *he humbled or abased himself or addressed himself with earnest or energetic supplication* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). Some explain *nabtahil* as meaning *natabâhil*, in which case the meaning would be *let us call down a curse upon which of us is the liar*.

61b. This chapter starts with a discussion of the Christian doctrines in particular. The persons addressed in particular in this verse are the members of the Christian deputation from Najrân that came in 10 A.H. This deputation, consisting of sixty men, was headed by ‘Abd al-Masîḥ, the chief of the Najrân Christians (*Bahr al-Muḥîṭ* (Commentary)), by Imâm Athîr al-Dîn Abû ‘Abd Allâh Abû Ḥayyân al-Undlusî, and the members of the deputation were lodged in the Prophet’s mosque. Thus did the Prophet set an example of freedom of devotional thought which remains without parallel to this day. The Prophet related to them arguments showing that ‘Îsâ was not Allâh, but a human being and a prophet (see concluding paragraph of 3:44a). After having argued the question fully, and finding them still insisting in their false belief in the deity of ‘Îsâ, they were invited as a last resort to pray earnestly that the curse of Allâh might overtake the party that insisted on falsehood. At first they showed readiness to enter this contest, but after some deliberation they decided against it and told the Prophet that they had decided not to pray against him as suggested (Bukḥârî 64:74). Thereupon they were given a pledge by which they were free to practise their way of life (*dîn*): “Their authority and rights shall not be interfered with, nor anything that is customary amongst them, so long as they conduct themselves peaceably and uprightly” (Muir).

It is strange to find Christian writers referring to this as “a strange mode of settling the dispute”. But evidently their Arabian co-believers in the Creator did not think so 1,300 years ago. They believed in the efficacy of prayer, for such was the teaching of ‘Îsâ. They saw the righteousness of the Prophet, and they were convinced of their own false beliefs and dared not invoke curses upon themselves with their own tongues, while they knew that the Prophet was too generous to curse them. Therefore they adopted the wise course of not calling for destruction to overtake them. Had they considered the Prophet as an imposter and Antichrist, as their descendants do today, they would not have had the least fear in accepting the challenge.

65 O People of the Book, (i.e., here the Jews and Naṣârâh) why do you dispute about Ibrâhîm, when the *Taurât* and the *Injîl* were not revealed till after him? Do you not understand?

66 Behold! You are they who disputed about that of which you had knowledge; why then do you dispute about that of which you have no knowledge? And Allâh knows while you know not.^a

64a. These are the very words occurring in a letter which the Prophet wrote to Heraclius in the year 6 A.H. (Bukhârî 1:1). Similar letters were written to several other potentates among whom was Muqauqis, the king of Egypt, and the discovery of the letter written to him furnishes proof of the reliability of the reports relating to the Prophet in general, for the manuscript letter contains the very words given in the hadîth. In this verse the Jews and the Naşârâh are called upon to accept the broad principles of the faith of Ibrâhîm, which were also the basic principles of the faith of Islâm. The reference in the sentence *some of us shall not take others for lords* is to the practice prevailing then both among Jews and Naşârâh, and at present among Muslims too, to take devotional leaders as invested with Divine powers, which is more clearly enunciated in 9:31: “They take their doctors of law and their monks for lords besides Allâh” (9:31). The verse under discussion lays down the basis of the study of comparative ways of life (*dîn*). Anyone who studies devotional literature on a wide scale will find that the basic doctrines of Islâm are the greatest common measure of the truth contained in different ways of life (*dîn*) of the world. The doctrine of Unity as taught by Islâm affords an illustration. All higher ways of life (*dîn*) start on the basis of Divine Unity which is thus common to all, but then each way of life’s (*dîn*) system has its peculiarities unknown to all others. Islâm alone is free from all these additions to the basic doctrine, and it preaches Unity in its simplest form and rejects all additions which are here classified as three: 1). Worshipping others than Allâh and addressing prayers to them. 2). Associating anything with Him which consists in ascribing Divine attributes to others. 3). Taking others as Lords besides Allâh which consists in rendering to others the perfect obedience which is due to Allâh alone. There are no idols, no deities, no incarnations of the Divine Being, no sons of God, and finally no *pîrs* and priests to be followed blindly.

67 Ibrâhîm was neither a Jew nor a Naşârâh, but he was (an) upright (man), a Muslim; and he was not one of the polytheists.

68 The nearest of people to Ibrâhîm are surely those who follow him and this Prophet and those who believe. And Allâh is the Friend of the believers.

69 A party of the People of the Book desire that they should lead you astray; and they lead not astray but themselves, and they perceive not.^a

70 O People of the Book, why do you disbelieve in the messages of Allâh while you witness (their truth)?

71 O People of the Book, why do you confound the truth with falsehood, and hide the truth while you know?

SECTION 8: **Machinations to Discredit Islâm**

72 And a party of the People of the Book says: Avow belief in that which has been revealed to those who believe, in the first part of the day, and disbelieve in the latter part of it, perhaps they may turn back.^a

66a. The Naṣârâh held a controversy with the Prophet regarding ‘Îsâ, of whom they had some knowledge, but about Ibrâhîm they had no detailed knowledge. The Jews invited people to a belief in the Torah and the Christians to a belief in the Gospel, but both these had lost the purity of the faith of Ibrâhîm which was pure monotheism, unmixed with either Jewish priesthood or Christian doctrine of sonship. This is made clear in the next verse.

69a. Their machinations are described in the last verse of this section and the opening verses of the next section.

73 And believe not but in him who follows your *Dîn*.^a Say: True guidance — Allâh’s guidance — is that one may be given the like of what you were given; or they would prevail on you in argument before your *Rabb*.^b Say: Grace is surely in Allâh’s hand. He gives it to whom He pleases. And Allâh is Ample-giving, Knowing.^c

74 He specially chooses for His mercy whom He pleases. And Allâh is the Owner of mighty grace.^a

72a. The words would bear two different significances according to what the personal pronoun in *âkhira-hû* refers to, for it may either refer to *that which has been revealed* or

to *the day*. The meaning in the first case is that a belief may be avowed in the earlier part of the revelation, while denying the latter portion, with the object of creating doubts as to the sincerity of the Prophet. They would say, for instance, that the earlier revelation was no doubt true, but that the Prophet aimed at personal aggrandizement in later revelation, a position which is to this day adopted by some of the Christian writers. If we adopt the other significance, the meaning would be that they should avow a belief in the truth of Islâm in the morning and deny it in the evening, and thus perturb the minds of those who had accepted Islâm, creating the impression that the *Dîn* of Islâm was a false way of life. It was a distinguishing characteristic of Islâm that people who once accepted it did not yield to any temptation under the severest trials. When Heraclius asked Abû Sufyân, the Quraish leader, if those who accepted Islâm recanted it, the reply was, No (Bukhârî 1:1). The Jews therefore wanted to shake this strong position of the truth of Islâm by making hypocritical avowal and then apostatizing in large numbers. The adoption of this plan is a clear proof that apostates were not put to death.

73a. The meaning is that the Jews should not believe in any prophet who did not follow their law, i.e., the new Rabbinic Judaism.

73b. The contention of the Jews not to believe in any prophet who did not follow the Rabbinic Judaism is met with the reply that a revelation must be given to another prophet like the revelation that had been given to Mûsâ, for the Divine promise to Mûsâ was: “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in his mouth” (Deuteronomy 18:18). This promise must be fulfilled, and the Prophet who was thus raised, being “like unto” Mûsâ, would be the real guide. But if prophethood was to be confined to the line of Isrâ’îl and no prophet was to be raised among the children of Ismâ’îl, who were also the “seed” of Ibrâhîm, the Muslim argument, as to the non-fulfillment of the promise given to Ibrâhîm and of the prophecy of Mûsâ as contained in the reconstructed Bible in the book of Deuteronomy 18:18, would be unanswerable. *Yuhâjjû-kum*, as the context shows, signifies here the Muslims’ prevailing in argument over their opponents. Hence it was that both the Jews and the Christians embraced Islâm in large numbers notwithstanding the severe opposition of their temporal and devotional leaders. Be that as it may. The Arabic Glorious Qur’ân states: “Surely We have sent to you a Messenger, a witness against you, as We sent a messenger to Pharaoh.” Chapter 73, verse 15.

73c. *Grace* here indicates *prophethood*. Compare the use of *good* in 2:105.

75 And among the People of the Book there is he who, if you entrust him with a heap of wealth, would pay it back to you; and among them is he who, if you entrust him with a Dînâr^a would not pay it back to you, unless you kept on demanding it. This is because they say there is no blame on us in the matter of the unlearned people and they forge a lie against Allâh while they know.^b

76 Yea, whoever fulfils his promise and keeps his duty — then Allâh surely loves the dutiful.

77 Those who take a small price for the covenant of Allâh and their own oaths — they have no portion in the Hereafter, and Allâh will not speak to them, nor will He look upon them on the day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them, and for them is a painful chastisement.

78 And there is certainly a party of them who lie about the Book^a that you may consider it to be (a part) of the Book while it is not (a part) of the Book; and they say, It is from Allâh, while it is not from Allâh; and they forge a lie against Allâh whilst they know.

74a. Allâh's choosing for His mercy stands here for His choice of a prophet, as in 2:105.

75a. *Dînâr* is an Arab gold coin of the value of about 10shillings.

75b. They considered themselves free from all responsibility towards the Gentiles, notwithstanding any engagement they might have made with them. Hence they considered it lawful to play all sorts of tricks with the Muslims. They are, however, told that Allâh never allowed dishonesty against any people.

78a. *Lawwâ lisâna-hû bi-kadhâ*, lit., *he twisted the tongue with a thing* implies *he lied about and forged a narration* (*Al-Mufradât fî Gḥharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî). And *alwâ hi-l-kalâm* means *he turned it* (i.e. *a speech or saying*) *away from its drift or altered or changed it altogether* (*Lisân al-'Arab* (Dictionary), by 'Allâmah Abu-l-Faḍl Jamâl al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Mukarram and the *Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muḥibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faïd Murtaḍâ*). *Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî quotes the following comment on the words of this verse from 'Abd Allâh ibn 'Abbâs (Companion): *What is implied is the reading of the false book*. And he says that in Arabic you use

different words for an action according as the good or evil of it is to be expressed, and then cites 2:79, which shows that the book which they read was not the book revealed by Allâh, but one which they had written with their own hands. The concluding words of this verse also point to the same conclusion: “They forge a lie against Allâh”.

79 It is not meet for a mortal that Allâh should give him the Book and the judgment and the prophethood, then he should say to men: Be my servants besides Allâh’s; but (he would say): Be worshippers of the Lord because you teach the Book and because you study (it);^a

80 Nor would he enjoin you to take the Malâ’ikah and the prophets for lords. Would he enjoin you to disbelieve after you submit?^a

SECTION 9: Covenant of the Prophets

81 And when Allâh made a covenant through the prophets: Certainly what I have given you of Book and Wisdom — then a Messenger comes to you verifying that which is with you, you shall believe in him, and you shall aid him. He said: Do you affirm and accept My compact in this (matter)? They said: We do affirm. He said: Then bear witness, and I (too) am of the bearers of witness with you.^a

79a. *Rabbânî*, which is the same as *ribbi* (from *Rabb*, or *Lord*), means *one who possesses a knowledge of the Lord*, or *one who is a worshipper of the Lord*. According to a saying of the Prophet, a *ribbî* is a *learned man*, a *teacher of others*, who *nourishes people with the small matters of knowledge before the great* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

80a. Thus according to the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân no prophet — ‘Îsâ included — ever taught his followers to take him as God; in other words, anyone who actually taught so could not be a prophet of Allâh. Even the current Gospels do not attribute any such teaching to Jesus. The *Malâ’ikah* are mentioned because the pagan Arabs worshipped the *Malâ’ikah* although they did not know what they are saying.

82 Whoever then turns back after this, these are the transgressors.

83 Seek they then other than Allâh's religion? And to Him submits whoever is in the *samâwât* and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him they will be returned.^a

84 Say: We believe in Allâh and that which is revealed to us, and that which was revealed to Ibrâhîm and Ismâ'îl and Ishâq and Ya'qûb and the tribes, and that which was given to Mûsâ and 'Îsâ and to the prophets from their *Rabb*; we make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit.

81a. *Mithâq al-nabîyyîn* means literally *the covenant of the prophets*, and may therefore signify either the covenant of the prophets *with Allâh* or the covenant of the prophets *with their people*. As the words that follow are plainly addressed to the people, the Jews and the Christians being particularly addressed in the last two verses, I adopt the latter interpretation, and therefore translate the words as meaning *a covenant through the prophets*. According to *Kashshâf* (Commentary), by Abu-l-Qâsim Maḥmûd ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharî: *When Allâh made the covenant which the prophets confirmed with their peoples*. Both Moses and Jesus specially laid an obligation on their people to accept the prophet about whom they prophesied. Thus, through Moses, Almighty Allâh had warned the Israelites, after promising them "a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee", that "Whosoever will not hearken unto My words which he shall speak in My name, I will require of him" (Deuteronomy 18:19). And Jesus was equally emphatic when, prophesying the advent of the Comforter, he added: "He will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak" (John 16:13). As a matter of fact the Prophet had his advent foretold by all the prophets of the world. The New Testament bears testimony to this: "Whom the heaven must receive until the time of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of *all His holy prophets since the world began*. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me: him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you" (Acts 3:21, 22). The covenant referred to was made through each prophet separately as he appeared in the world. And just as all the prophets foretold the advent of the Prophet Muḥammad and laid an obligation upon their people to accept him, so the Prophet Muḥammad also taught his followers to believe in all the prophets that had appeared among different people in different ages, and this is stated in what follows. The truth of the first statement that all prophets foretold the advent

of the Prophet Muḥammad is borne out by the second statement that that Prophet would bear testimony to the truth of all the prophets of the world.

83a. Compare 13:15, 22:18, etc., where it is said that all those who are in the heavens and the earth make submission to Allāh. The verse, in fact, shows that Islām, or the rule of submission to Divine law, is a law which is seen working throughout nature, and this is an argument of the truth of the religion of Islām.

85 And whoever seeks a *dīn* other than Islām, it will not be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers.^a

86 How shall Allāh guide a people who disbelieved after their believing, and (after) they had borne witness that the Messenger was true, and clear arguments had come to them? And Allāh guides not the unjust people.^a

87 As for these, their reward is that on them is the curse of Allāh and the *Malâ'ikah* and of men, all together —

88 Abiding therein. Their chastisement shall not be lightened, nor shall they be respited^a—

89 Except those who repent after that and amend, for surely Allāh is Forgiving, Merciful.

90 Those who disbelieve after their believing, then increase in disbelief, their repentance is not accepted, and these are they that go astray.^a

85a. The cosmopolitan nature of the religion of Islām having been clearly set forth in the previous verse, it is now stated that anyone who refused to accept such a religion would unfailingly lose in the end. A Muslim accepts the whole truth; the truth as revealed to any prophet anywhere in the world; the followers of other religions accept only partial truth, the truth as revealed to them only, not truth as revealed to all mankind.

86a. The persons meant are those who believed in the former prophets and disbelieved in the Holy Prophet Muḥammad. Having clear signs of the Prophet's truth with them, and professing a belief in the prophets who had foretold the advent of the last of the prophets, they still disbelieved in him. How should Allāh guide a people who thus rejected guidance?

88a. Instead of hell here it is the curse — remoteness from Allāh — in which the guilty shall abide, and thus a light is thrown upon the nature of hell.

90a. The persons spoken of here are the same as those spoken of in verse 86. They believed in the previous prophets but rejected the Prophet Muḥammad. Their repentance is not accepted, because they show no signs of real repentance. They continued to oppose, and tried to annihilate, the Truth.

91 Those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, the earth full of gold will not be accepted from one of them, though he should offer it as ransom. These it is for whom is a painful chastisement, and they shall have no helpers.

SECTION 10: Ever-living Testimony to the Truth of Islām

92 You cannot attain to righteousness unless you spend out of what you love. And what you spend, Allāh surely knows it.^a

93 All food was lawful to the Children of Isrâ'îl,^a before the Taurât was revealed, except that which Isrâ'îl forbade himself. Say: Bring the Taurât and read it, if you are truthful.^b

94 So whoever forges a lie against Allāh after this, these are the wrongdoers.

92a. The connection with the last verse is clear. No wealth will buy redemption for a man if he has wasted his opportunity here, and to make the best of that opportunity a man must spend here what he loves most. Attention is thus called to the sacrifices which it was necessary for the Muslims to make.

93a. The Jews objected to the Muslims making use of certain foods which the law of Mûsâ did not allow. An answer is given here that such foods were lawful for Ibrâhîm and his descendants, and Islām agreed in principle with the religion of Ibrâhîm. By *all food* is meant *all food made lawful for Muslims*.

93b. What was that which Isrâ'îl forbade himself? The commentators say it was camel's flesh. Camel's flesh was, no doubt, forbidden to the Isrâ'îlites (Leviticus 11: 4) as were several other things which were lawful for Muslims. Elsewhere, after mentioning the foods prohibited to the Isrâ'îlites in particular, it is added: "This was a punishment We gave them on account of their rebellion" (6:146). So that which Isrâ'îl forbade himself was, in fact, that which was made unlawful for the Isrâ'îlites on account of their rebellious attitude towards Mûsâ. Isrâ'îl thus stands here for the Isrâ'îlite people. As

regards their rebellious attitude, see 5:21–26, where it is explained that when they refused to follow Mûsâ into the Holy Land they were made to wander about in the wilderness for forty years. The camel here was a necessity of life for them to carry them and their burdens from place to place.

95 Say: Allâh speaks the truth; so follow the *millah* (the way as Allâh dictated or the creed) of Ibrâhîm, the upright one. And he was not one of the polytheists.

96 Certainly the first house appointed for human beings is the one at Bakkah,^a blessed and a guidance for the nations.^b

97 In it are clear signs: (It is) the Place of Ibrâhîm; and whoever enters it is safe; and pilgrimage to the House is a duty which human beings owe to Allâh — whoever can find a way to it.^a And whoever disbelieves, surely Allâh is above need of the worlds.

96a. Bakkah is the same as Makkah (*Al-Mufradât fî Gharrîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî) from *tabâkk* meaning *the crowding together* of human beings (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). Others say it is from a root meaning *the breaking of the neck*, and the name is given to it because whenever a tyrant forced his way to it, his neck was broken (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). Some think that Bakkah is the name of the mosque or the House itself that is in Makkah. The Jews and the Christians are told that the Temple at Jerusalem was erected long after Ibrâhîm, while the Holy House at Makkah was there even before Abraham, and was, in fact, the first House on earth for the worship of the Divine Being. The subject has been fully discussed in 2:125a.

96b. If, on the one hand, Makkah is declared to be the *first House* raised on earth for the worship of the Divine Being, it is, on the other, announced to be *Mubâarak*, which word, though ordinarily rendered as *blessed*, signifies the *continuance for ever* of the blessings which a thing possesses, or *that from which extensive good flows* (*Lisân al-'Arab* (Dictionary), by 'Allâmah Abu-l-Fadl Jamâl al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Mukarram). Thus Makkah is the first religious centre that was appointed for men, and it is the ultimate religious centre for the whole of humanity.

97a. The clear signs in Makkah as enumerated here, are three, and these, in fact, are three prophecies with regard to the future of Makkah. The first sign is that it is the Place of Abraham which has already been declared to be the Muslim centre (2:125*b*). Hence the first prophecy is that the doctrine of the Unity of the Diving Being will be proclaimed to the whole world from this centre. The second sign is that Makkah will always be secure, i.e., it shall not fall into the hands of an enemy who should destroy it. There is a saying of the Prophet to the effect that the Antichrist and the plague will not enter Makkah and Madînah (Bukhârî 29:9). Thus its security is assured both physically and religiously. The third prophecy is that a pilgrimage to the Sacred House shall continue to be made for ever, and no power in the world shall ever be able to put a stop to it. The most striking fact about these prophecies is that they were all announced at a time when the Prophet and his followers had apparently been driven away for ever from the Sacred Place, when that place was in the exclusive possession of an enemy who did not allow the Muslims to visit the place even during the sacred months, and when the small Muslim community was in danger of being utterly destroyed by that powerful enemy at any moment. It may be added here that the pilgrimage to the Sacred House is not an unconditional obligation; it is incumbent only on those who are able to undertake a journey to it.

98 Say: O People of the Book, why do you disbelieve in the messages of Allâh? And Allâh is a witness of what you do.

99 Say: O People of the Book, why do you hinder those who believe from the way of Allâh, seeking (to make) it crooked, while you are witnesses? And Allâh is not heedless of what you do.^a

100 O you who believe, if you obey a party from among those who have been given the Book, they will turn you back as disbelievers after your belief.

101 And how can you disbelieve while to you are recited the messages of Allâh, and among you is His Messenger? And whoever holds fast to Allâh, he indeed is guided to a right path.

SECTION 11: Muslims Exhorted to Remain United

102 O you who believe, keep your duty to Allâh, as it ought to be kept, and die not unless you are Muslims.^a

103 And hold fast by the covenant of Allâh^a all together and be not disunited. And remember Allâh's favour to you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts so by His favour you became brethren. And you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He saved you from it.^b Thus Allâh makes clear to you His messages that you may be guided.

99a. The Jews and the Christians had secretly joined hands with the idolaters of Arabia to crush Islâm.

102a. The controversy with the People of the Book having come to an end, and the truth of Islâm having been established, the Muslims are now exhorted, first to be individually conscious of the duty they owe to Allâh (verse 102), and then to remain united in carrying the message of Islâm to the whole world (verse 103). Every Muslim must live a life of true submission to Allâh, so that when death comes to him it should find him a Muslim. As verse 104 shows, the Muslim's great duty to which attention is called here is the carrying of the message of Islâm to others.

103a. The Arabic word for covenant is *ḥabl*, which means primarily *a rope* or *a cord*, and hence *a bond*, *a cause of union*, *a bond of love* or *friendship*, *a covenant* or *a compact* by which one becomes responsible for the safety of a person or a thing (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). By *ḥabl-Allâh*, or *the covenant of Allâh*, is meant *the Qur'ân*, a significance supported by two sayings of the Prophet, according to one of which *the Book of Allâh is the covenant (or rope) of Allâh*, and according to the other *the Qur'ân is the firm covenant (or rope) of Allâh* (*Bahr al-Muhîṭ* (Commentary), by Imâm Athîr al-Dîn Abû 'Abd Allâh Abû Ḥayyân al-Undlusî). All Muslims, we are here told, should be united in holding fast to the Qur'ân and carrying its message to other people.

104 And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. And these are they who are successful.^a

105 And be not like those who became divided and disagreed after clear arguments had come to them. And for them is a grievous chastisement.

106 On the day when (some) faces turn white and (some) faces turn black. Then as to those whose faces are black: Did you disbelieve after your belief? So taste the chastisement because you disbelieved.^a

103b. Before the advent of the Holy Prophet, the Arabs were in a state of continual internecine warfare which threatened to devastate the whole country. As a modern writer says: “A more disunited people it would be hard to find, till suddenly, the miracle took place! A man arose who by his personality and by his claim to direct Divine guidance, actually brought about the impossible — namely, the union of all these warring factions” (Ins and Outs of Mesopotamia, p. 99).

It should be noted that in Arabic literature and in the Qur’ân, *nâr*, or *fire*, is often a symbol of *war*. The Arabs used to kindle a *fire* as a sign that war was contemplated, so that the tribes should assemble. Hence the use of the word as implying war. In the Qur’ân itself we read, “whenever they kindle a fire for war, Allâh puts it out” (5:64).

104a. The heated imagination of a Christian annotator sees a flash of “the sword” in these words. Compare 9:122: “And the believers should not go forth all together. Why, then, does not a company from every party from among them go forth that they may apply themselves to obtain understanding in religion and that they may warn their people when they come back to them that they may be cautious?” Both verses, in fact, direct the Muslims to have always among them a missionary party, whose only object should be the propagation of Islâm and rightly directing their own people. This is the most neglected injunction of the Qur’ân in our day. Muslims have arrangements for all things but have no arrangements for inviting people to the great truth revealed in the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân. The word *khair* means *good*, and the Qur’ân is called *khair* in 2:105.

107 And as to those whose faces are white, they shall be in Allâh’s mercy. Therein they shall abide.

108 These are the messages of Allâh which We recite to you with truth. And Allâh desires no injustice to (His) creatures.

109 And to Allâh belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And to Allâh are all affairs returned.

SECTION 12: Relations of Jews with Muslims

110 You are the best nation raised up for men: you enjoin good and forbid evil and you believe in Allâh.^a And if the People of the Book had believed, it would have been better for them. Some of them are believers but most of them are transgressors.

111 They will not harm you save a slight hurt. And if they fight you, they will turn (their) backs to you. Then they will not be helped.^a

106a. By *faces turning white* is meant *their being expressive of joy*, and by *their turning black*, *their being expressive of sorrow* (*Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaiikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). Abû Mansûr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Azharî (Grammarians) says you say a man is *abyaḍ* (white) when you mean that he is free from dross and defects (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muḥibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faïd Murtaḍâ*).

110a. Not only are the Muslims the chosen people of Allâh, who are now called upon to be the standard-bearers of Truth in the world, but they are at the same time declared to be the best of the people that had ever been chosen for this purpose. This was no doubt due to the excellence of that Great Teacher who thoroughly purified them of the worst vices and made perfect the light within them. No prophet ever found a people in a worse condition, and none ever raised his people to such eminence. Note that the excellence of the Muslim people lies in their enjoining good and forbidding evil and in their great faith in Allâh. If they lose these characteristics, they lose their excellence as well.

112 Abasement will be their lot wherever they are found, except under a covenant with Allâh and a covenant with men, and they shall incur the wrath of Allâh, and humiliation will be made to cling to them. This is because they disbelieved in the messages of Allâh and killed the prophets unjustly. This is because they disobeyed and exceeded the limits.^a

113 They are not all alike. Of the People of the Book there is an upright party who recite Allâh's messages in the night-time and they adore (Him).

114 They believe in Allâh and the Last Day, and they enjoin good and forbid evil and vie one with another in good deeds. And those are among the righteous.

115 And whatever good they do, they will not be denied it. And Allâh knows those who keep their duty.^a

111a. The Jews in Arabia sided with the enemies of Islâm in their endeavour to extirpate the new religion, and this notwithstanding their pact with the Muslims, but they were not successful in inflicting any serious harm upon the Muslims, and whenever they openly faced the Muslims they .ed. As the concluding words show, the idolaters, who gave them secret promises of help, never came to their aid when they were in distress.

112a. Almost the same words, excluding the exception, occur in 2:61. The Jews had already been subjected to the greatest humiliation and disgrace before the appearance of the Prophet. But with the advent of Islâm they could better their condition either by accepting the covenant of Allâh, by which is meant the acceptance of Islâm or by making a compact of security with such men as could give them protection. This remains true to this day.

115a. The opinion has been held, very plausibly indeed, that verses 113–115 speak of the good among the Jews and the Christians, and not of those who became converts to Islâm, because the Muslims could not be said to be *a party of the People of the Book*. It is a fact that the Qur'ân does not deny that there is good in others, its own eminence over others lying in the fact that it makes man attain the highest degree of perfection in goodness. It is for this reason that the description of the upright party among the followers of the Book concludes with the words, *whatever good they do, they will not be denied it*. Generally, however, the commentators are of opinion that the description given here refers to those Jews and Christians who became converts to Islâm.

116 Those who disbelieve, neither their wealth nor their children will avail them aught against Allâh. And these are the companions of the Fire; therein they abide.

117 The likeness of that which they spend in the life of this world is as the likeness of wind in which is intense cold; it smites the harvest of a people who are unjust to themselves and destroys it. And Allâh wronged them not but they wronged themselves.^a

118 O you who believe, take not for intimate friends others than your own people:^a they spare no pains to cause you loss. They love that which distresses you. Vehement hatred

has already appeared from out of their mouths, and that which their hearts conceal is greater still. Indeed We have made the messages clear to you, if you understand.

119 Lo! You are they who will love them while they love you not,^a and you believe in the Book, (in) the whole of it. And when they meet you they say, We believe, and when they are alone, they bite (their) finger tips in rage against you. Say: Die in your rage. Surely Allâh is Knower of what is in the hearts.

117a. The failure which is throughout the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân prophesied for the enemies of Islâm is referred to here. The parable is similar to the one given in 68:17–33.

118a. As the context shows, the Jews assisted the enemies of Islâm to make war upon the Muslims, so the Muslims were warned against close and intimate relations with them; see 60:8, 9.

119a. This verse clearly indicates the difficulties which the Muslims had in establishing friendly and loving relations with non-Muslims. The Muslims would fain proffer friendship, but the other party was always on the look-out for some opportunity to inflict loss on them, and the candour of the Muslims was repaid with insincerity and treachery.

120 If good befalls you, it grieves them, and if an evil afflicts you, they rejoice at it. And if you are patient and keep your duty, their struggle will not injure you in any way. Surely Allâh encompasses what they do.

SECTION 13: **The Battle of Uhud**

121 And when thou didst go forth early in the morning from thy family, to assign to the believers their positions for the battle. And Allâh is Hearing, Knowing.^a

122 When two parties^a from among you thought of showing cowardice, and Allâh was the Guardian of them both. And in Allâh should the believers trust.^b

123 And Allâh certainly helped you at Badr when you were weak. So keep your duty to Allâh that you may give thanks.

121a. It is to the events of the battle of Uhud that this and the following sections are devoted. In the third year of the Hijrah Abû Sufyân marched against Madînah. The

Prophet at first intended to stay within the town, but afterwards marched into the open field with a thousand men, one-third of whom, under the leadership of ‘Abd Allâh ibn Ubayy, the great hypocrite leader, left him and returned to Madînah. The enemy was first completely routed, but fifty Muslim archers, who were placed in a strong position to cut off the retreat of the enemy, made a mistake, and in order to join in the pursuit left their position. The enemy fell back upon the Muslims who were now in disorder and had lost their naturally fortified position, and after inflicting some loss upon them, left the field secure from the pursuit of the Muslim force. It was not a victory for the Quraish, who thought it safe to go back when they found the Muslims involved in their own troubles. They could not take a single prisoner of war, nor had they the courage to attack Madînah, which they did two years later with a very strong force.

122a. The two tribes of the *Banû Salimah*, and the *Banû Harithah* are meant (Bukhârî 64:18).

122b. This shows that they did not actually show cowardice. The desertion of the Muslim force by ‘Abd Allâh ibn Ubayy with his three hundred men made some of the Muslims also entertain the idea of deserting the army on account of superior enemy forces, but they did not actually desert it.

124 When you did say to the believers: Does it not suffice you that your *Rabb* should help you with three thousand *malâ’ikah* sent down?^a

125 Yea, if you are steadfast and keep your duty, and they come upon you in a headlong manner, your *Rabb* will assist you with five thousand of havoc-making *malâ’ikah*.^a

126 And Allâh made it only as good news for you, and that your hearts might be at ease thereby. And help comes only from Allâh, the Mighty, the Wise,

127 That He may cut off a part of those who disbelieve or abase them so that they should return in failure.^a

124a. The enemy numbered only one thousand where one thousand *malâ’ikah* are stated to have been sent (8:9). Now when the enemy was three thousand strong, the Muslims were promised the help of three thousand *malâ’ikah*. The fulfilment of this promise is referred to in verse 152. What was the object of the coming of the *malâ’ikah*? The matter is fully explained in the 8th chapter in connection with the promise of the coming of

malâ'ikah in the battle of Badr. As here, it is first stated there that the promise was given only “as good news, and that your hearts might be at ease thereby, and victory is only from Allâh” (8:10). The verse that follows makes the object clearer: “When He made slumber fall on you as a security from Him, and sent down upon you water from the clouds that He might thereby purify you and take away from you the uncleanness of the *shaitân*, and that He might fortify your hearts and making firm (your) feet thereby”. Hence the object was to strengthen the Muslims by improving their position in the field of battle and by strengthening their hearts, and this is expressed still more clearly further on: “When your *Rabb* revealed to the *malâ'ikah*: I am with you, so make firm those who believe. I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve” (8:12). The believers being thus strengthened while terror was cast into the enemy’s heart, the object of sending the *malâ'ikah* was achieved, and the small Muslim force was able to defeat a powerful enemy that outnumbered them by three to one.

125a. The word used in the original is *musawwim* and not *musawwam*, and it is from *sawwama* ‘*ala al-qaum* meaning *he urged his horse against the people and made havoc among them*. Hence *musawwim* is *one who makes havoc*. The assistance of the *malâ'ikah* stated in this verse refers to a third occasion, when the enemy came “in a headlong manner”, all the tribes uniting with the Quraish to crush the Muslims. This happened in the battle of *Ahzâb*, or the Allies, when the Quraish, whose number was very likely about five thousand, with the help of strong allied forces — the total strength being near twenty thousand — suddenly attacked Madînah. The dispersal of such a large army when the Muslims were only about fourteen hundred was no doubt due to Divine help, sent through angelic hosts.

128 You have no concern in the matter whether He turns to them (mercifully) or chastises them; surely they are wrongdoers.^a

129 And to Allâh belongs whatever is in the *samâwât* and whatever is in the earth. He forgives whom He pleases and chastises whom He pleases. And Allâh is Forgiving, Merciful.

SECTION 14: What Success meant for the Muslims

130 O you who believe, devour not usury, doubling and redoubling, and keep your duty to Allâh, that you may be successful.^a

131 And guard yourselves against the fire which has been prepared for the disbelievers.^a

127a. Notwithstanding that the object of the disbelievers in their war on the Muslims was their extirpation, the latter are told that the Divine object in punishing the disbelievers by war was not to extirpate them, but to cut off their ringleaders and chiefs. The word *taraf* signifies *a part* or *a portion* of a thing (*Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain *al-Râghib al-Isfahânî*), and hence it is applied to *a company of men*, and also to *leading men*. *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane translates *atrâf al-ard* as meaning *the exalted* or *the noble and the learned men of the earth*. When the leaders of mischief were cut off, the rest would be disappointed of attaining the object of extirpating Islâm, and persecution would cease. The verses that follow corroborate this conclusion. The enemy's description as having returned in failure in this battle shows clearly that they were not successful or victorious in the battle. Their great general *Khâlid* became a convert to Islâm on his way to Makkah.

128a. "Ibn 'Umar said that he heard the Messenger of Allâh saying, when he raised his head after *rukû* in the last *rak'ah* of the morning prayer: 'O Allâh, curse such and such people ...' So Allâh revealed to him, Thou hast no concern in the matter ... Surely they are wrongdoers" (*Bukhârî* 64:22). As a mortal the Prophet might have sometimes desired a severe punishment for his enemies; but he is told that it was not his concern, for Allâh might as well forgive them, even though they deserved punishment. The all-comprehensiveness of the Divine mercy expressed in this verse is unapproached in sacred literature.

130a. It is not in temporal greatness and the accumulation of wealth that the Muslims' real success lies; hence usury which engenders love of wealth is forbidden. See 2:275a, where it is shown how the subject of usury is connected with war. It may be added that borrowing money on interest is also forbidden (*Al-Misbâh al-Munîr fî Gharîb al-Sharh al-Kabîr* (Dictionary), by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alî al-Muqrî al-Fayûmî 12:4). Not only individuals, but even Muslim kingdoms, have been ruined by borrowing large sums of money on interest, leading to foreign interference in their affairs.

131a. The fire in this case is excessive love of wealth, as plainly stated elsewhere: “Woe to every slanderer, defamer, who amasses wealth and counts it — he thinks that his wealth will make him abide ... It is the fire kindled by Allâh which rises over the hearts” (104:1–7).

132 And obey Allâh and the Messenger, that you may be shown mercy.^a

133 And hasten to forgiveness from your Rabb and a Garden, as wide as the heavens and the earth; it is prepared for those who keep their duty:

134 Those who spend in ease as well as in adversity and those who restrain (their) anger and pardon men. And Allâh loves the doers of good (to others).^a

135 And those who, when they commit an indecency or wrong their *nafsuhum*, remember Allâh and ask forgiveness for their sins. And who forgives sins but Allâh? And they persist not knowingly in what they do.

136 Their reward is protection from their *Rabb*, and Gardens wherein rivers flow to abide in them. And excellent is the reward of the workers!

137 Indeed there have been examples^a before you; so travel in the earth and see what was the end of the deniers.

132a. The loss suffered at Uhud was due to disobedience in relation to a certain position which was forsaken against the orders of the Prophet. The retreating Makkan army turned upon the pursuers, among whom disorder had ensued, and several Muslims were slain, the Prophet himself being wounded. So they are told that they must obey Allâh and His Messenger if they would have Divine mercy.

134a. Restraining of anger, pardoning, and doing good to each other, besides being great moral qualities, strengthen the bond of union which is so necessary for success. The verse has on many occasions inspired the noblest thoughts of toleration and charitableness. Hasan’s servant having on one occasion upset a boiling hot dish on his master obtained his liberty along with monetary help by reciting this verse. Thinking that he would be punished for his fault, he repeated the words; “Those who restrain their anger.” Hasan said he was not angry. “And pardon men,” added the servant. Hasan said: “I pardon you.” “And Allâh loves the doers of good,” concluded the offending slave. “I give you liberty

and four hundred pieces of silver,” was the response. “A noble instance of moderation and generosity,” is Sale’s comment upon this incident.

138 This is a clear statement for men, and a guidance and an admonition to those who would keep their duty.

139 And be not weak-hearted, nor grieve, and you will have the upper hand if you are believers.

140 If a wound has afflicted you, a wound like it has also afflicted the (disbelieving) people. And We bring these days to men by turns, that Allâh may know^a those who believe and

take witnesses from among you. And Allâh loves not the wrongdoers,

141 And that He may purge those who believe and deprive the disbelievers of blessings.

142 Do you think that you will enter the Garden while Allâh has not yet known those from among you who strive hard (nor) known the steadfast?

143 And certainly you desired death before you met it. So indeed you have seen it now while you look (at it).^a

137a. *Sunan* is plural of *Sunnah*, meaning *a way or a rule or manner of acting or conduct or life or the like* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). Hence the significance here is *ways or examples of Allâh’s dealing with the righteous and the wicked*.

140a. That Allâh knows all that is seen or unseen and all that is manifest or concealed is asserted in numerous places in the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân. The *knowing* here and the *not knowing* in verse 142 refer to the knowledge of the event. Allâh knew who *would prove* themselves true believers, who *would* strive hard in His way, and who *would* be steadfast under trials; but who *did* prove themselves true believers, who *did* strive hard, and who *were* steadfast in suffering could only be said to be known when these things had happened.

143a. This refers to the desire of those who insisted that they should meet the enemy in the open field, while the Prophet’s own desire was that the Muslims should defend themselves within Madînah. Their desire for fighting the enemy or for being slain in the cause of truth is called a desire for death.

SECTION 15: Sufferings to be met with Perseverance

144 And Muḥammad is but a messenger — messengers have already passed away before him.^a If then he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels? And he who turns back upon his heels will do no harm at all to Allāh. And Allāh will reward the grateful.^b

145 And no soul can die but with Allāh's permission — the term is fixed.^a And whoever desires the reward of this world, We give him of it, and whoever desires the reward of the Hereafter, We give him of it. And We shall reward the grateful.

146 And how many a prophet has fought, with whom were many worshippers of the Rabb.^a So they did not lose heart on account of that which befell them in Allāh's way, nor did they weaken, nor did they abase themselves. And Allāh loves the steadfast.

144a. The Prophet received severe wounds in the battle of Uhud; there was even a rumour that he was killed. It is to this that the verse refers. Even if the Prophet were killed, Islām was so far superior to all forms of faith that the Muslims could not give up Islām. Truth was truth, though its advocate might be killed in a battle; nor could falsehood and superstition be accepted, though their advocates might prevail for a time. While this verse lays stress on the essential truth of Islām, it served another important purpose at the death of the Prophet. Some of the companions thought that the Prophet was not dead. Abû Bakr went in, and seeing that life had departed, ascended the pulpit and read this verse, which had a magical effect upon his hearers, all of them being convinced that the Prophet had passed away, as all prophets had passed away before him. The prophets were but mortals, and their span of mortal life must no doubt terminate like that of other mortals. This verse affords a conclusive proof that "Jesus Christ" was also dead; otherwise Abû Bakr's argument could not have silenced the doubters of the Prophet's death.

144b. The doing of harm to Allāh stands for the doing of harm to the Divine cause; i.e. the Truth, which was now represented by Islām.

145a. While the statement conveys a general truth which makes Muslims face death with complacency, the words seem to refer also to the death of the Prophet, giving an assurance to the Muslims that the time of his death had not yet come.

146a. For the meaning of *ribbî*, see 79a. It is a curious coincidence that Sale, Rodwell, and Palmer have all given a wrong translation of this verse: “How many prophets have encountered those who had many myriads of troops.” This is Sale’s rendering and the others are similar. I find no commentator lending any support to this significance, nor can the words bear this interpretation.

147 And their cry was only that they said: Our *Rabb*, grant us protection from our sins and our extravagance in our affair, and make firm our feet and grant us victory over the disbelieving people.

148 So Allâh gave them the reward of the world and a good reward of the Hereafter. And Allâh loves the doers of good (to others).

SECTION 16: Causes of Misfortune in Uhud Battle

149 O you who believe, if you obey those who disbelieve, they will make you turn back upon your heels, so you will turn back losers.^a

150 Nay, Allâh is your Patron, and He is the Best of the helpers.

151 We will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve^a because they set up with Allâh that for which He has sent down no authority, and their abode is the Fire. And evil is the abode of the wrongdoers.

149a. The war was carried on only with the object of making the Muslims renounce their way of life as prescribed by Allâh, and hence they could not think of accepting the disbelievers as their rulers.

151a. Notwithstanding the great disproportion in numbers, the Muslims being less than one-fourth of their opponents, being at the same time not so well equipped as their foes, and in spite of the disorder into which the Muslim forces had fallen, the enemy had to flee, leaving the Muslims in the field, not even making a show of attacking Madînah, which was quite defenceless. This clearly shows that they were terror-stricken even after they had inflicted some loss upon the Muslims, considering it safer to go back to Makkah while the Muslims were yet occupied with their own troubles and were unable to pursue them.

152 And Allâh certainly made good His promise to you^a when you slew them by His permission, until you became weak-hearted and disputed about the affair and disobeyed after He had shown you that which you loved.^b Of you were some who desired this world, and of you were some who desired the Hereafter.^c Then He turned you away from them that He might try you; and He has indeed pardoned you.^d And Allâh is Gracious to the believers.

153 When you went away far, and paid no heed to anyone, and the Messenger was calling you in your rear.^a So He gave you (another) grief for (your) first grief that you might not grieve at what escaped you, nor (at) what befell you. And Allâh is Aware of what you do.

152a. The promise is contained in v. 124: “When thou didst say to the believers: Does it not suffice you that your Lord should help you with three thousand angels?”

152b. It clearly shows that the Muslims had obtained a victory at Uhud, later incidents depriving them of the fruits of that victory. Though apparently all the fighters are spoken of here as becoming weak-hearted, the reference is only to that group of archers who disobeyed the Prophet’s orders, as the words that follow show: *Of you were some who desired this world*. Nor did any of the Muslims show any weak-heartedness in fighting against the enemy. The weak-heartedness of a part of the archers who were placed in an important position to cut off the enemy’s retreat consisted in their disobeying the clear orders of the Prophet: “If you see us overcoming the enemy leave not your position, and if you see the enemy overcoming us, leave not your position”, the Prophet had told the archers. But they fell a prey to the love of the world and left their position to get a share in the booty when they saw the enemy fleeing before the Muslim onrush.

152c. These were the two parties of the body of archers. When the enemy was apparently routed, some of these archers were led by the love of plunder to leave their position, while their chief, ‘Abd Allâh ibn Jubair, with only some ten men, stuck to their post. Muslims were required to fight in Allâh’s way, and if any Muslim fought for plunder, he fought for the love of this world and not in Allâh’s way.

152d. The enemy, who was being pursued, turned against the pursuers on seeing the important position of the archers vacated, and the result was that the Muslims who were now in disorder on account of the pursuit found themselves helpless against the enemy

who turned back on them, and some of them who were cut off from the main body took to fight. We are, however, here told that Allâh pardoned them as their fight was the result of circumstances which were beyond their control. ‘Uthmân is said to have been one of them.

153a. It refers to the Prophet’s call, at whom the Muslims now saw that the attack of the enemy was directed. So they did not grieve for losing an opportunity of pursuing the enemy, but for the dangerous position in which they saw the Prophet. This is, in fact, plainly stated in what follows: “that you might not grieve at what escaped you,” i.e. the booty which they would have had by pursuing the fleeing enemy, “nor at what befell you,” i.e., the loss which they themselves suffered. *Athâba* sometimes conveys the idea of *giving one thing instead of another, the giving of a substitute* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). They forgot their own grief when they saw that it was the Prophet at whom the attack was directed now.

154 Then after grief He sent down security on you, slumber overcoming a party of you,^a while (there was) another party whom their own *nafsuhum* had rendered anxious — they entertained about Allâh thoughts of ignorance quite unjustly.^b They said: Have we any hand in the affair?^c Say: The affair is wholly (in the hands) of Allâh. They hide within their *nafsihim* that which they would not reveal to thee. They say: Had we any hand in the affair, we would not have been slain here.^d Say: Had you remained in your houses, those for whom slaughter was ordained would have gone forth to the places where they would be slain.^e And (this happened) that Allâh might test what was in your breasts and that He might purge what was in your hearts. And Allâh is Knower of what is in the breasts.^f

154a. *Nu’âs* means *slight sleep*; it is said that *Nu’âs* here implies *calm and quiet* (*Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur’ân* (Dictionary of Qur’ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî). It must have happened when the enemy departed. The slumber was a sign of security, for no army could have gone to rest while yet in the field of battle if it had the least anxiety as to its security.

154b. The persons spoken of here are the disaffected who took no part in fighting. They now gave vent to their hidden rancour against the Muslims. The evil thoughts which the hypocrites entertained about Allâh were that Allâh had not helped the Muslims.

154c. The hypocrites sided with the minority whose counsel was that the Muslims should not fight the enemy in the open field and should remain besieged in Madînah. The majority was, however, in favour of going out and meeting the enemy where it had encamped. The Prophet decided that the majority vote must be accepted. Hence the hypocrites' murmuring as to why their counsel was not accepted.

154d. Their contention was that the disaster would not have befallen the Muslims if their advice as to remaining within the town had been accepted. They took no part in fighting but they spoke of the loss of the Muslims as their own loss.

155 Those of you who turned back on the day when the two armies met, only the *shaitân* sought to cause them to make a slip on account of some deeds they had done, and certainly Allâh has pardoned them. Surely Allâh is Forgiving, Forbearing.^a

SECTION 17: **Battle of Uhud Afforded a Distinction**

156 O you who believe, be not like those who disbelieve and say of their brethren when they travel in the earth or engage in fighting: Had they been with us, they would not have died, or been slain;^a that Allâh may make it to be a regret in their hearts. And Allâh gives life and causes death. And Allâh is Seer of what you do.

157 And if you are slain in Allâh's way or you die, surely Allâh's protection and (His) mercy are better than what they amass.

154e. Remaining in the houses here signifies meeting the enemy while remaining in Madînah. By *those for whom slaughter was ordained* are meant the martyrs of Uhud. The murmurings of the hypocrites are met with the reply that even if the Muslims had defended themselves by remaining in Madînah, those who laid down their lives in the field of Uhud would have laid them down in Madînah as well. Death was moreover a thing ordained.

154f. This explains Allâh's testing what is in the hearts. He knows it, and His testing it means making it manifest to others. The attitude of the hypocrites was made manifest by the fighting in Uhud. It would have remained hidden if the battle had been fought in Madînah.

155a. The persons spoken of here are those who were unable to join the main Muslim army and fled to Madīnah, or in some other direction. However pressed they may have been it was not right on their part to leave the field of battle. Here it is spoken of as a slip on their part; it did not amount to intentional disobedience and Allāh granted them a free pardon.

156a. By “their brethren” are meant their relatives who were sincere in their profession of Islām, and who had to lay down their lives in defence of their faith.

158 And if you die or you are slain, to Allāh you are gathered.

159 Thus it is by Allāh’s mercy that thou art gentle to them. And hadst thou been rough, hard-hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around thee.^a So pardon them and ask protection for them, and consult them in (important) matters.^b But when thou hast determined, put thy trust in Allāh^c Surely Allāh loves those who trust (in Him).

160 If Allāh helps you, there is none that can overcome you; and if He forsakes you, who is there that can help you after Him? And in Allāh should the believers put their trust.

159a. It is remarkable that the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân calls attention to the Prophet’s gentle dealing with those around him when speaking of his experience in the field of battle as a general, leading his men against overwhelming forces, a capacity which required him to be very strict in punishing any delinquency. But he was not a mere general. His ability in leading his men, in occupying positions of advantage in the field of battle, and in directing a handful of men to face three, four, and sometimes ten times their own number, marks him out as the ablest general the world has ever seen, yet his gentle manners and his practical forbearance in dealing with his friends as well as foes stand in remarkable contrast with his capacity as a commander in the field of battle. It is related that after the Uhud trouble the Prophet did not speak even a harsh word to those who were guilty of disobeying his orders (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî).

The Qur’ân is full of references to the Holy Prophet’s gentleness and kind dealing with his fellow-men. The following verse gives us an insight into this trait of his character: “Certainly a Messenger has come to you from among yourselves; grievous to

him is your falling into distress, most solicitous for you, to the believers (he is) compassionate, merciful” (9:128).

159b. The Prophet had gone out to meet the enemy as the result of a consultation and against his own inclination, for he sided with the minority in the opinion that they should not meet the enemy in the open field. Apparently that council had brought about the present trouble, yet so firm was he in adhering to sound principles that at such a critical time he did not waver for a minute from the course of taking counsel in important matters, and just at this juncture we find Divine revelation clearly laying down the principle of adhering to counsel.

159c. It should be noted that trusting in Allâh does not imply inaction. Everything necessary is to be done, a course of action must be determined in the proper manner, and then in pursuing that course trust must be placed in Allâh, which clearly implies that a man should do his utmost and then leave the consequences to Allâh; that is, he must be resigned to what follows, taking the consequences with a cool mind.

161 And it is not for a prophet to act dishonestly.^a And whoever acts dishonestly will bring his dishonesty on the day of Resurrection. Then shall every soul be paid back fully what it has earned, and they will not be wronged.

162 Is then he who follows the pleasure of Allâh like him who incurs Allâh’s displeasure, and his abode is hell? And it is an evil destination.

163 There are grades with Allâh. And Allâh is Seer of what they do.

164 Certainly Allâh conferred a favour on the believers when He raised among them a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His messages and purifying them, and teaching them the Book and the Wisdom, although before that they were surely in manifest error.

165 What! When a misfortune befell you, and you had inflicted twice as much, you say: Whence is this? Say: It is from yourselves. Surely Allâh is Possessor of power over all things.^a

161a. The words may be taken in a general sense, the indication being that the disaster was not due to any wrongful act on the part of the Prophet, as a prophet cannot act wrongfully or dishonestly. Or, there may be a hint to some such idea lurking in the minds

of the hypocrites or the disobeying archers. Prophets are raised to purify others as stated further on in verse 164, and they are therefore free from all impurities.

165a. The disbelievers had already suffered twice at the hands of the Muslims, once in the field of Badr and again in the early stages of the battle of Uhud. In Badr alone they had inflicted on the disbelievers double the loss which they suffered in Uhud. At the latter place they lost only seventy killed, while at Badr the disbelievers lost 140, seventy killed and seventy prisoners.

166 And that which befell you on the day when the two armies met was by Allâh's permission, that He might know the believers,

167 And that He might know the hypocrites. And it was said to them: Come, fight in Allâh's way, or defend yourselves.^a They said: If we knew fighting,^b we would have followed you. They were on that day nearer to disbelief than to belief; they say with their mouths what is not in their hearts. And Allâh best knows what they conceal.

168 Those who said of their brethren whilst they (themselves) held back: Had they obeyed us, they would not have been killed. Say: Avert death from yourselves, if you are truthful.

169 And think not of those who are killed in Allâh's way as dead. Nay, they are alive being provided sustenance from their *Rabb*,

170 Rejoicing in what Allâh has given them out of His grace, and they rejoice for the sake of those who, (being left) behind them, have not yet joined them, that they have no fear, nor shall they grieve.

171 They rejoice for Allâh's favour and (His) grace, and that Allâh wastes not the reward of the believers.

167a. The words show clearly that in the language of the Qur'ân, *fighting in Allâh's way* carries the significance of *fighting in self-defence*.

167b. They feigned they did not know how to fight. Or the meaning may be, *if we knew that it was a fight*, the implication being that the Muslims were going, not to fight but to sure destruction with such a disparity of numbers.

SECTION 18: Uhud No Gain to the Enemy

172 Those who responded to the call of Allâh and the Messenger after the misfortune had befallen them — for such among them who do good and keep their duty is a great reward.^a

173 Those to whom men said: Surely people have gathered against you, so fear them; but this increased their faith, and they said: Allâh is sufficient for us and He is an excellent Guardian.

174 So they returned with favour from Allâh and (His) grace; no evil touched them, and they followed the pleasure of Allâh. And Allâh is the *Lord* of mighty grace.^a

175 It is the *shaitân* who only frightens his friends, but fear them not, and fear Me, if you are believers.^a

176 And let not those grieve thee who run into disbelief precipitately; surely they can do no harm to Allâh. Allâh intends not to assign them any portion in the Hereafter; and for them is a grievous chastisement.

172a. The Makkan army was pursued the next day to a place known as *Hamrâ' al-Asad*, under which name the expedition is known. Such was the spirit of invincibility of the Muslim army even after the loss suffered at Uḥud.

174a. Verses 173–175 refer to the expedition known as *Badr al-Suḡhrâ* the smaller Badr, to be undertaken next year, because Abû Sufyân, commander of the Makkan army, announced, when leaving the field of Uḥud that he would meet the Muslims the following year at Badr, but notwithstanding its threats the Makkan army never marched forth. The Muslims on the other hand gained much benefit by trading in a fair held there, as indicated in verse 174.

175a. As emissary, Nu‘aim, was hired by the Makkans to spread terror among the Muslims, and he is the *shaitân* spoken of here (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). By the *shaitân's friends* are meant the hypocrites.

177 Those who buy disbelief at the price of faith can do no harm to Allâh, and for them is a painful chastisement.

178 And let not those who disbelieve think that our granting them respite is good for themselves. We grant them respite only that they may add to their sins; and for them is a humiliating chastisement.

179 Allâh will not leave the believers in the condition in which you are until He separates the evil from the good. Nor is Allâh going to make you acquainted with the unseen, but Allâh chooses of His messengers whom He pleases. So believe in Allâh and His messengers. And if you believe and keep your duty, you will have a great reward.

180 And let not those who are niggardly in spending that which Allâh has granted them out of His grace, think that it is good for them. Nay, it is evil for them. They shall have a collar of their niggardliness on their necks on the Resurrection day. And Allâh's is the heritage of the heavens and the earth. And Allâh is Aware of what you do.^a

SECTION 19: Carplings of People of the Book

181 Allâh has certainly heard the saying of those who said: Allâh is poor and we are rich. We shall record what they say, and their killing the prophets unjustly, and We shall say: Taste the chastisement of burning.^a

180a. The same idea, though in more general terms, as to the effect of deeds being bound to the neck, is expressed in 17:13: "And We have made every man's actions to cling to his neck, and We shall bring forth to him on the day of Resurrection a book which he will find wide open". Thus every man carries the effect of his deeds with him in this life, but on the day of Resurrection that effect will become clearly visible. Thus is the effect of niggardliness made to cling to the necks of the niggardly.

182 This is for that which your own hands have sent before, and because Allâh is not in the least unjust to the servants.

183 Those who say: Allâh has enjoined us that we should not believe in any messenger until he brings us an offering which is consumed by the fire.^a Say: Indeed there came to you messengers before me with clear arguments and with that which you demand. Why then did you try to kill them, if you are truthful?^b

184 But if they reject thee, so indeed were rejected before thee messengers who came with clear arguments and scriptures and the illuminating Book.^a

181a. The Jews ridiculed the poverty of the Muslims and their borrowings from the Jewish money-lenders. They also ridiculed the raising of funds for the defence of the faith by subscriptions. See 5:64, 64a.

183a. The reference is to the burnt offerings of the Mosaic law, for which see Leviticus 1:9: “And the priest shall burn all on the altar, to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire”. And Deuteronomy 33:10 where, blessing Israel, Moses says: “They shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar”. Compare also Leviticus 8:18. The demand of the Jews that the Prophet should bring to them an offering which the fire should consume is only a demand for the burnt-offering of the Israelite law, so that what they persisted in was that the promised prophet should be an Israelite and should revive the Israelite law.

183b. The carpers are here told that they even sought to kill those prophets who followed the Mosaic law, who came, “with that which you demand”. Hence their rejection was due to the stubbornness of their hearts.

184a. The prophets are said to have come with three things — with arguments and with the *Zabur* and the illuminating Book. *Zabur* is the plural of *zubrah*, which means *a big piece of iron*, and of *zabûr*, which signifies *a written thing*. According to *Al-Mufradât fî Gharîb al-Qur’ân* (Dictionary of Qur’ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî, *every book which is hard in writing is called a zabûr*. According to the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane, *zabûr* signifies *a Divine book which it is difficult to become acquainted with*. *Zajjâj* (Grammarians) says, *every book full of wisdom is a zabûr* (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî). The commentators generally understand by the *zabur* the sacred scriptures of the prophets and by the *illuminating Book* the book containing the guidance which every prophet brought to his people, so that they should follow those directions.

185 Every *nafs* will taste of death. And you will be paid your reward fully only on the Resurrection day. Then whoever is removed far from the Fire and is made to enter the Garden, he indeed attains the object. And the life of this world is nothing but a provision of vanities.

186 You will certainly be tried in your property and your persons. And you will certainly hear from those who have been given the Book before you and from the idolaters much

abuse.^a And if you are patient and keep your duty, surely this is an affair of great resolution.

187 And when Allâh took a covenant from those who were given the Book: You shall explain it to men and shall not hide it. But they cast it behind their backs and took a small price for it. So evil is that which they buy.

186a. This verse speaks of the sufferings which were yet in store for the Muslims. They had certainly been tried respecting their property and their persons at Makkah. They had been deprived of their property and turned out of their homes; they had been severely persecuted and even put to death for professing Islâm. But this verse, revealed undoubtedly after the battle of Uhud in the year 3 A.H., speaks of sufferings which were yet to come. It plainly speaks of the future, rather of the distant future, because Islâm was now being firmly established in Arabia. The rise of Islâm was, however, to be followed by a setback of which there are indications in the Qur'ân and the sayings of the Prophet. Thus we are told in a hadîth that Islâm started its career as *gharîb* (as *a stranger* in a land or as *a sufferer* at the hands of others) and that it will once more (i.e. after rising to power) return to the state in which it began (*Sunan (Hadîth)*, by Abû 'Abd Allâh Muḥammad ibn Yazîd *ibn Mâjah* al-Qazwînî 35:15). The abuses which have been heaped on Islâm in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries are indeed without a parallel, not only in the history of Islâm but in the whole history of religion. The abusive language of the Christian, political, as well as missionary, press and the vituperations of their imitators in the Hindu press have out stepped all bounds. Thus both the People of the Book and the idolaters have joined hands in hurling the worst abuses at Islâm and its Founder. But we are here told that the Muslims shall, in addition to the abuse of their religion, be made to suffer both respecting their property and their persons. If they have so often been turned out of their houses in the past century in Europe, and Muslim States have been wiped out of existence in many parts of the world, the twentieth century presents a yet ghastlier scene of their woes in India. In a country in which they have been living for over a thousand years, and where their population was no less than a hundred millions, they have been turned out of their homes mercilessly and the cruelest tortures known to human history have been inflicted on them in broad daylight and the civilized world has not yet raised a finger against this genocide and the perpetration of these

brutalities. It is these calamities which are spoken of in this verse. The concluding words of the verse are the only hope of Islâm in the present tribulations — to be steadfast and keep their duty to Islâm.

188 Think not that those who exult in what they have done, and love to be praised for what they have not done — think not them to be safe from the chastisement; and for them is a painful chastisement.

189 And Allâh's is the kingdom of the *samâwât* and the earth. And Allâh is Possessor of power over all things.

SECTION 20: Ultimate Triumph of the Faithful

190 In the creation of the *samâwât* and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day, there are surely signs for men of understanding.

191 Those who remember Allâh standing and sitting and (lying) on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our *Rabb*, You have not created this in vain! Glory be to You! Save us from the chastisement of the Fire.^a

192 Our *Rabb*, whomsoever You make enter the Fire, him You indeed bring to disgrace. And there will be no helpers for the wrongdoers.

191a. This chapter, like the one before it, ends with a prayer for the victory of Faith over disbelief and a prediction for its ultimate triumph. The first two verses of the section point out two distinguishing characteristics of the faithful. It is pointed out that they are neither recluses who retire to a corner of solitude for the remembrance of Allâh, nor yet do they pursue the conquest of nature without ever thinking of the Author and *Rabb* of creation. On the one hand, they are described as remembering Allâh in the midst of all worldly affairs and worldly pursuits, *standing and sitting and lying on their sides*, being thus fully conscious of the Divine presence everywhere and in all conditions; and, on the other, they set out for the conquest of nature with the full consciousness that *nothing has been created in vain* and that a purpose underlies the whole of creation. This is the grand object which Islâm sets before its followers, to conquer self by remembrance of Allâh and to conquer nature by pursuit of knowledge.

193 Our *Rabb*, surely we have heard a Crier calling to the faith, saying: Believe in your *Rabb*. So we do believe. Our *Rabb*, grant us protection from our sins and remove our evils and make us die with the righteous.

194 Our *Rabb*, grant us what You have promised us by Your messengers and disgrace us not on the day of Resurrection. Surely You never fail in (Your) promise!

195 So their *Rabb* accepted their prayer, (saying): I will not suffer the work of any worker among you to be lost whether male or female, the one of you being from the other. So those who fled and were driven forth from their homes and persecuted in My way and who fought and were slain, I shall truly remove their evil and make them enter Gardens wherein flow rivers — a reward from Allâh. And with Allâh is the best reward.^a

196 Let not control in the land, of those who disbelieve, deceive you.

197 A brief enjoyment! Then their abode is hell. And evil is the resting-place.

198 But those who keep their duty to their *Rabb*, for them are Gardens wherein flow rivers to abide therein; and entertainment from their Lord. And that which Allâh has in store for the righteous is best.

195a. This is a promise which includes all those companions of the Holy Prophet who fled from their homes, and those who were persecuted, and those who fought in his company. The concluding words of the verse show that the promise *to make them enter Gardens* relates to this life as well, and its fulfilment was brought about in the worldly achievements of the Muslims. The reward of the Hereafter is separately spoken of in the words; *with Allâh is the best reward*.

199 And of the People of the Book there are those who believe in Allâh and (in) that which has been revealed to you and (in) that which has been revealed to them, humbling themselves before Allâh — they take not a small price for the messages of Allâh. These it is that have their reward with their *Rabb*. Surely Allâh is Swift to take account!

200 O you who believe, be steadfast and try to excel in steadfastness and guard (the frontiers). And keep your duty to Allâh that you may be successful.^a

200a. The last section, while predicting victory for the Muslims, requires them to be humble in the hour of triumph, as in the last chapter. The concluding verse speaks of three things as the key to success. The first is *ṣabr*, which conveys the significance of endurance and perseverance in trials and perseverance in the doing of good. The second is *muṣābarah*, which means *vying in ṣabr or steadfastness with each other, or trying to excel the enemy in endurance*. The third is *ribāṭ*, which means *guarding or stationing the army on the frontiers*, to guard it against the enemy. All three words carry a temporal as well as a devotional significance. What is inculcated here is, on the one hand, showing endurance in wars, excelling the enemy in endurance and to remain in readiness on the frontiers of the Muslim territory to meet the enemy, and, on the other, remaining steadfast in keeping away from evil and keeping to obedience to Allāh, trying to excel each other in the quality of endurance and to remain on guard against the Evil one on the frontiers. What is meant by the last is explained in a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet: “What is lawful is manifest and what is unlawful is manifest and between these two are doubtful things which many people do not know. So whoever guards himself against the doubtful things, he keeps his *Dīn* (the way of life as prescribed by Allāh) and his or her honour unsullied, and whoever falls into doubtful things is like the herdsman who grazes his cattle on the borders of a reserve — he is likely to enter it. Know that every king has a reserve and know that the reserve of Allāh in His land is what He has forbidden” (Bukhārī 2:38). The Arabic Glorious Qur’ān thus, while not neglecting the temporal needs of human beings, aims at his devotional perfection.